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A

GUIDE TO THE CHURCH;

IN

SEVERAL DISCOURSES.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

TWO POSTSCRIPTS;

THE FIRST,

TO THOSE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WHO OCCASIONALLY FREQUENT OTHER PLACES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP;

THE SECOND,

TO THE CLERGY.

v. 1

WITH

A new Introductory Preface to the Reader.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES DAUBENY,

ARCHDEACON OF SARUM.

"There shall be no *Schism* in the Body." 1. Cor. xii. 25.

SECOND EDITION.

PRINTED FOR

F. C. AND J. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON;

BY R. CRUTTWELL, BATH.

1804.

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TO THE READER.

THE following Diſcourſes were originally deſigned for private circulation in a particular pariſh. Being written for that purpoſe, their accommodation to the exiſting ſtate of that pariſh conſtituted of courſe the principal object in view. Should therefore ſome parts of the ſubject be more dilated, than may be thought neceſſary for general information; or ſome circumſtances noticed which might have been omitted; the candid reader will, it is hoped, make allowance for what on theſe accounts may be an unwelcome treſpaſs upon his time. Thus much it may be proper to ſay in behalf of the Diſcourſes before him.

As an excuſe, if excuſe be neceſſary, for the alteration of my plan in giving them to the public, I have to plead, that upon their reviſal for the preſs, they were judged to convey ſome information applicable to the general circumſtances of Chriſtians in this

country; and that new books, though containing nothing freſh upon the ſubjects of which they treat, will be read; whilſt old ones, more fraught with information, lie uſeleſs on the ſhelf.

The Poſtſcripts ſubjoined to the Diſcourſes muſt ſpeak for themſelves; becauſe they were written for the purpoſe to which they are applied.

Upon the ſubject of Eſtabliſhments I have nothing to unſay. Upon this ſubject I have written as I have been always taught to think. An uniformity of ſentiment on great and momentous ſubjects conſtitutes a criterion, by which the thinking honeſt man will ever be diſtinguiſhed. The oppoſite infirmity (if it may be called by ſo ſoft a name) will, I truſt, never attach itſelf to my character. From the reader who differs from me in opinion, I have only, therefore, to crave that candour which, I truſt, I ſhall on all occaſions be ready to return.

"Errare poſſum, litigioſus eſſe non volo."

To write upon eccleſiaſtical ſubjects without cenſure, is what no author muſt expect. The chief ſource, therefore, from which his ſatisfaction muſt be derived, will be the ſincerity of his intention. To promote in any degree the honour of GOD by preſerving the unity of the church, is an object which

every miniſter of that church ought to have at heart. With this view I have placed myſelf at the door of the temple with my torch; in the full confidence, that whoever ſhall be induced to enter in, will abide there for ever.

But though I am too well acquainted with mankind to expect that, after what has been heretofore written on the ſubject of *church communion*, any thing now ſaid upon it will produce effect on thoſe in whoſe minds judgment in this matter has been already paſſed; yet, if I may prove the inſtrument of confirming one wavering member of the church in a rational attachment to it, I ſhall not think my time to have been wholly thrown away. Should it, however, be the will of that Divine Maſter, in whoſe ſervice I feel myſelf engaged, that I ſucceed not even thus far; there is one conſolation remaining, which I ſhall ſtill enjoy in common with all thoſe of my brethren, who have exerted themſelves in a ſimilar cauſe; that ſo far at leaſt as this ſubject is concerned,

PREFACE TO THE READER.

THE writer who ſeeks not popularity, muſt not expect to be popular; whilſt he whoſe object is truth, will be ſatisfied with the conviction, that the poſitions laid down by him are capable of being ſubſtantiated by their proper proofs. Should it be his misfortune to be writing to a world too much engaged with itſelf, or too indifferent to the ſubject he is handling, to give it due attention, he will conſider himſelf as one born out of due time; and that his words are not true, *only* becauſe they are not *ſeaſonable*;—a conſideration, which, to a man who has learned that the truth of GOD is of more value than the whole world, cannot, in the preſent day, be ſo much a ſubject for ſurpriſe, as it is for regret.

An endeavour to rouſe Chriſtians from an apparent apathy to a due ſenſe of the tremendous danger attendant on that unſettlement of principles, and un-

ſettlement of inſtitutions, which characteriſe the preſent revolutionary age; and to guard againſt the deſertion of thoſe old and tried paths, by which, under GOD, this country has been conducted to the acmé of national pre-eminence; by oppoſing a barrier to thoſe licentious opinions, and irregular practices, which, if not counteracted, muſt terminate in the deſtruction of our excellent conſtitution; and by expoſing the fallacy of that ſpecious reaſoning on Church ſubjects in particular, by which uninformed minds are continually drawn aſtray from the eſtabliſhed road of truth into the bye-paths of error and ſchiſm; is an endeavour, for my engagement in which, as a miniſter of the Church of England, I have no apology to offer. At the ſame time, when I conſider the vitiated taſte of a faſtidious public, which cauſes the generality of readers to pay more attention to poliſhed periods than to the matter they contain, and, from an inſatiable thirſt after *new* things, to neglect the laying in that fundamental information neceſſary to qualify them to diſtinguiſh the chaff from the wheat in any ſubject of importance; I certainly feel it neceſſary to claim indulgence for a work, which, rejecting all meretricious ornaments unſuited to its dignity, profeſſes only to deliver thoſe plain words of truth and ſoberneſs, which are beſt calculated for general edification. Whilſt to every one ſeriouſly attending to the ſubjects contained in the following pages, (and to no other we write) it muſt, it is pre-

ſumed, evidently appear, that the opinion of the world can conſtitute no ſtandard, by which the judgment of any reader of them ought to be determined.

The kingdom of CHRIST, confeſſedly, is not of this world: it was eſtabliſhed with the intent, that this world ſhould be conformed to it; not that this kingdom ſhould, from time to time, be made conformable to the fluctuating opinions of a capricious world. As this kingdom then, according to the account given of it in Scripture, is to endure to the end of time; it is to be expected, that the government of it ſhould correſpond with its nature. no leſs than with the character of the faith it was intended to preſerve, —that of being "the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever."

That ſuch is the caſe, (we have authority for aſſerting) no honeſt enquirer, properly qualified, can entertain a doubt. "It is evident (ſays our Church, in the preface to her Conſecration Service) unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture, and ancient authors, that from the Apoſtles' time there have been theſe orders of miniſters in CHRIST'S Church—Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons. And, therefore, to the intent that theſe orders may be continued, and reverently uſed and eſteemed, in the Church of England, no man ſhall be accounted, or taken to be, a lawful Biſhop, Prieſt, or Deacon in the Church of England, or ſuffered to execute any of the ſaid functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and ad-

mitted thereunto, according to the form hereafter following, or hath had formerly episcopal consecration or ordination." On this supposed *unquestionable* ground, established by historical proof of the uniformity of the Ecclesiastical Constitution for a long succession of ages, the Church of England has proceeded with confidence in her judgment on this important subject. Hence it is, that in her Canons she exclusively appropriates the title of a *true* and *lawful Church* to that society of Christians in this country assembled under episcopal government; and determines all separatists from it to be schismatics: the sin of schism, according to its old and established definition, consisting in a wilful and needless separation from a true and lawful church. In praying, therefore, against schism in her litany, the Church prays against that sin, which in the Act for Uniformity, 14, c. ii, is described as attaching to those Christians, who, "following their own sensuality, and living without knowledge and due fear of GOD, do wilfully and *schismatically* abstain from, and refuse to come to, their parish churches," &c.

With the same view of the subject, the *visible* Church of Christ (which the Church on earth was designed to be) is described in our Article to be "a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of GOD is preached, and the sacraments duly administered *according to Christ's ordinance*, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the

ſame."—Art. 19. For, on the ground that a commiſſion authoriſing the adminiſtration of the ſacraments conſtituted an eſſential part of *Chriſt's ordinance;* as the Apoſtles could not become ſtewards of the myſteries of the Goſpel, till our Saviour thought fit to make them ſuch; and conſequently did not adminiſter the ſacraments previous to their having received a commiſſion from him, authoriſing them ſo to do: therefore the ſacraments cannot, in the judgment of the Church of England, be *duly adminiſtered according to Chriſt's ordinance*, but by thoſe miniſters, who, being "lawfully called and ſent into the LORD's vineyard," thereby receive the ſame divine commiſſion tranſmitted to them from the Apoſtles, for the diſcharge of the ſame ſacred truſt. And a commentator on the Apoſtles' Creed has obſerved, that thoſe two articles, "the *holy Catholic Church*, and the *Communion of Saints*," were inſerted on purpoſe to prevent ſchiſm; and that *that* alone is their true ſenſe and aim. No ſchiſmatic, therefore, can with a ſafe conſcience repeat theſe two articles; inaſmuch as by his ſchiſm he far too clearly and emphatically declares his diſbelief of any peculiar holineſs in the Catholic Church, and his diſregard of the duty and the bleſſing of a Communion of Saints."*

The queſtion then is, Has the Church of England judged correctly on this ſubject, or not? To the determination of this queſtion, the eſtabliſhment of her own

* King on the Creed, 310, 325.

right to the title of a *true Apostolical* Church of Christ may be thought a neceſſary preliminary. Admitting this right to be eſtabliſhed, a point which every well-informed reader is competent to decide for himſelf, what was ſchiſm in the days of the Apoſtles, muſt continue to be ſchiſm ſtill. For, on the aſſumption that the body of Chriſt, under its appropriate government, remains what it originally was; no circumſtances of piety, learning, or wiſdom, joined with ſchiſm, can change the nature of the ſin.

But we venture to ſay, and it is by no means an haſty poſition that we advance, but one that has ſtood the teſt of deliberate and repeated inveſtigation, that no ancient hiſtorical fact in the annals of mankind is capable of equal demonſtration with that of the original conſtitution of the Chriſtian Church. Nay, we ſay further, that no point of doctrine profeſſed in the Church, ſtands on equally unqueſtionable ground with it. For we know of no doctrine, however clearly revealed, that has not, during the progreſs of Chriſtianity in the world, met with its occaſional oppugners. But ſuch, for the ſpace of the firſt fifteen centuries of the Chriſtian æra, was not the caſe with reſpect to the Apoſtolic Government of the Church. Biſhops, indeed, were occaſionally ſet up againſt biſhops, and thereby the communion of the Church broken by ſchiſm; at the ſame time that the general poſition reſpecting the divine origin and eſtabliſhment of Epiſcopal government was admitted on both ſides. In

fact, the position relative to the Apostolic government of the Church by Bishops, stands confirmed by the testimony, not of this or that country only, but by the united, and for a long time uninterrupted testimony, of all Christendom. For the first fifteen centuries, no Church of Christ, in any part of the world, was known to exist under any other government; and it has been only since that period, which unfortunately gives date to the introduction of a different form, that Episcopacy has met with opposition from those, who have found themselves obliged to write it down, as the only way to discharge themselves from that sin, which must otherwise necessarily attach to a needless separation from it. At the same time, the attacks that for this purpose have been made on the Episcopal government of the Church, from the earliest date down to the present time, have served to prove the strength of the ground on which that government stands.

But it is much more easy to cavil about words, than to argue upon subjects; to start trifling objections, than fairly to defend them. And this mode of proceeding, the opponents of Episcopacy well know, is calculated to answer good purpose; because it throws stumbling-blocks in the way of ignorant minds, without, at the same time, furnishing sufficient information to qualify the parties to remove them; and every degree of doubt created, relative to the truth of any cause, becomes a step in advance towards the opposite

conviction. But ſurely never does the human mind ſo much expoſe its weakneſs, as when it deſerts the public road of long-eſtabliſhed knowledge, and ventures to ſtrike out new paths for its devious movements; entangling itſelf with briars and thorns, and ſtumbling over ſtones, and ſtumps of trees, till it at laſt loſes itſelf in an impervious wilderneſs. It being, however, our object to point out the beaten path of truth, rather than to trace the wandering courſe of error; to the objections that cavillers are continually bringing forward on this controverted ſubject, relative to the platform of Church Government not being found *totidem verbis* laid down in the ſacred writings; and the order of Biſhops not being to be clearly traced up to the Apoſtles; it is enough to ſay, that to us ſufficient information appears to have been communicated in them to determine both thoſe points. But were the information conveyed in the Apoſtolic writings on theſe ſubjects more ſcanty than it really is, this deficiency has been abundantly made up by the *unequivocal* teſtimony borne to theſe points by ſubſequent writers; ſome of whom were contemporaries with the Apoſtles, and ſupreme adminiſtrators of that government of which they ſpeak. Proofs on this head will be found in their proper place. Suffice it for our preſent purpoſe to obſerve, with Biſhop Taylor, that either CHRIST hath left no government for his Church, and in ſuch caſe the Apoſtles muſt have greatly miſunderſtood an eſſential part of

their high office; or moſt certainly the Church hath retained that government, whatſoever it is: becauſe it is unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the original Founder of the Church would be wanting to the preſervation of his own inſtitution.

Admitting, then, that Clemens, Ignatius, Irenæus, and Cyprian, were honeſt men, and no fools, their teſtimony on this ſubject ought to be completely ſatisfactory to every reaſonable man. And if to their teſtimony be added the concurrent uniform practice of fifteen centuries, the concluſion from ſuch premiſes will follow, in the words of an ancient author;* that we muſt take care above all things to adhere to that which has been believed in all places, at all times, and by all perſons; for this is truly and properly Catholic; and conſequently, that "it never was, nor is, nor ever ſhall be, lawful to teach Chriſtian people any other thing, than that which has been received," from a primitive fountain.

In a word, the ſtrength of the argument, in defence of the Apoſtolic Government of the Church, lies in this undoubted truth, that the Chriſtian prieſthood is a divine inſtitution; which, as it could have no beginning but from GOD, ſo neither could it be continued, but in the way appointed by GOD for

* "Magnoperè curandum eſt, ut id teneamus quod *ubique*, quod *ſemper*, quod *ab omnibus*, creditum eſt. Hoc eſt enim verè proprieque Catholicum. Annunciare ergo Chriſtianis Catholicis, præter id quod acceperunt, nunquam licuit, nunquam licet, nunquam licebit." —Vincent. Lirin. adv. Hæres. cap. 5—14.

that purpoſe. What that way was, the Apoſtolic practice has plainly ſhewn. For CHRIST was in all that the Apoſtles did; and "GOD was in CHRIST, reconciling the world to himſelf." The miniſtry of this reconciliation was committed by CHRIST to his Apoſtles; and that miniſtry was confeſſedly branched out by them into three diſtinct orders, diſtinguiſhed from each other by the appropriate titles of Biſhop, Preſbyter, and Deacon. From whence it follows, in anſwer to the objections above referred to, that from what our LORD *ſaid* to his Apoſtles, and from what they *did* in conſequence of his directions, ſufficient information was conveyed, to enable the governors of the primitive Church perfectly to underſtand the plan, and continue the form of polity which the Apoſtles had begun; which form, the uniform hiſtory of the Church for fifteen centuries has demonſtrably proved to be, what that of the Church of England now is, in the true ſenſe of the word, *Epiſcopal.*

This argument, three centuries ago, would have been conſidered unanſwerable: But ſince men thought proper to depart from the government of the primitive Church, and to erect a new platform of Church diſcipline, it has become neceſſary that their reaſoning ſhould correſpond with their practice. Hence it has happened, in defiance of the undeniable poſition, that what was once truth on this head muſt be truth ſtill, that Epiſcopacy has in theſe

later days become a ſubject of leſs eſtabliſhed reputation than it heretofore was. "The Reformation (as an able Divine of our Church long ſince remarked) gave ſuch a turn to weak heads, that had not weight enough to poize themſelves between the extremes of Popery and fanaticiſm, that every thing older than yeſterday was looked upon to be Popiſh and anti-Chriſtian. The meaneſt of the people aſpired to the prieſthood, and were readier to frame new laws for the Church, than obey the old."—SHERLOCK.

The progreſs of error, however, in this caſe, as in moſt others, has been gradual. Thoſe foreign reformers who were the firſt eſtabliſhers of a new form of government in the Church, pleaded neceſſity for their conduct. It is not our buſineſs to examine the juſtice of that plea, but in candour to admit it. We therefore ſay for them, what on this occaſion they ſaid for themſelves, that they conſidered it to be a moſt unjuſt aſperſion of their character to ſay, they were *anti*-Epiſcopalians, or that they condemned or threw off Epiſcopacy *as ſuch;* on the contrary, they lamented their unhappy circumſtances, that they were not in a ſituation to partake of that advantage, which England ſo eminently enjoyed in this reſpect; conſidering their want of Epiſcopacy to be more their misfortune than their fault. Such was at one time the declared language of *Calvin* and *Beza*. And long after their day, when the aſſembly of divines

at Weſtminſter, under the influence of the Scotch Covenanters, applied to the learned Blondel to bring forward what could be ſaid in favour of the Preſbyterian form, with the view of giving countenance to the plan then in agitation for overturning the ancient Apoſtolical Church government in England, he concluded his apology * for the opinion of Jerom with words to the following purpoſe: "By all that we have ſaid to aſſert the rights of Preſbytery, we do not intend to invalidate the ancient and Apoſtolical conſtitution of Epiſcopal pre-eminence; but we believe, that whereſoever it is eſtabliſhed conformably to the ancient Canons, it muſt be carefully preſerved; and whereſoever, by ſome heat of contention, or otherwiſe, it has been put down or violated, it ought to be reverently reſtored." This concluſion, not

* Dr. Munro, in his *Enquiry into the new Opinions*, &c. makes the following juſt obſervation on this work of Blondel, entitled, "Apologia pro ſententiâ Hieronymi." Amſtel. 1646. "When (ſays he) the government and revenues of the Church were ſacrilegiouſly invaded by atheiſts and enthuſiaſts, under Oliver Cromwell, the learned Blondel employed all his ſkill to make the ancients contradict themſelves, and all contemporary records; and though every line that he had written, with the leaſt colour of argument, had been frequently anſwered and expoſed, it was ſtill thought enough for the enemies of Epiſcopacy to ſay, that Blondel had written a book of 549 pages to ſhew that Jerom was of their opinion, and had ſufficiently proved, that this ancient monk was a Preſbyterian."—Would my reader wiſh to form a particular judgment reſpecting the validity of Blondel's ſentiments on the ſubject of Epiſcopacy, he will be qualified for the purpoſe by an appeal to Dr. Hammond's learned Diſſertations, entitled "Diſſertationes Quatnor, quibus Epiſcopatûs Jura ex S. Scripturis et primævâ antiquitate adſtruuntur, contra ſententiam D. Blondelli," &c.

being ſuited to the object the aſſembly had in view, was, in conſequence of very preſſing remonſtances againſt it, kept back; though, in juſtice to truth, it ought to ſtand on record, as it here does.*

But when this new form of Church government, which in its origin pleaded *neceſſity* for its introduction, and was conſidered, by the introducers of it, as ſupplying the place of what was then acknowledged to be a better thing, became ſo rampant as to bear with no oppoſition; thoſe Preſbyters whom Calvin declared ought to be *anathematized*, who would not reverence ſuch an hierarchy as the Church of England poſſeſſed, trampled that very hierarchy under foot, as an anti-Chriſtian, iniquitous, and tyrannical uſurpation;†—When, at a ſubſequent period, Epiſcopacy was reſtored with the Monarchy of this country, the Church of England returned to her ori-

* This important piece of information is given at full length in a letter from Dr. P. du Moulin to Dr. Durell, and publiſhed in the Appendix to his "View of the Government and Public Worſhip of God in the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas." P. 339, 340.

† "Talem ſi nobis hierarchium exhibeant, in quâ ſic emineant Epiſcopi, ut Chriſto ſubeſſe non recuſent, et ab illo tanquam unico capite pendeant, et ad ipſum referantur; in quâ ſic inter ſe fraternam ſocietatem colant, ut non alio modo quam ejus veritate ſint colligati, tum vero *nullo non anathemate dignos* fatear, ſi qui erunt, qui non eam revereantur, ſummaque obedientia obſervent."—Calvin de Neceſſ. Eccles. Reform.

Beza's language on this ſubject was equally ſtrong. Speaking of the Epiſcopacy of the Church of England, he ſays, "Fruatur ſanè *iſta ſingulari Dei beneficentia*, quæ utinam ſit illi perpetua."—Tract. de Miniſt. Eccl. Grad. cap. i. and xviii.

ginal ideas on this ſubject; conſidering the caſe of Diſſenters as a ſchiſmatical ſeparation from the Communion of a true and Apoſtolical Church. The diſcourſes written on this occaſion, for the purpoſe of recovering the Diſſenters to unity, though, through the infirmity of human nature, they failed in producing the deſired effect, do infinite honour to the divines of that day; and ought to be in the hands of every clergyman, who would be thoroughly acquainted with the weakneſs of the objections, by which the unhappy ſeparation from the Communion of the Church of England was originally maintained.*

The increaſing eſtabliſhment of ſeparate congregations, which took place ſince the above period, though it could not alter the ſtate of the caſe, as it really ſtands between the member of the Church and the ſeparatiſt, or in any degree change the nature of the ſin of ſchiſm, tended however to looſen the ideas of Chriſtians in general on the ſubject of Church communion; ſo that ſome who entertained very correct notions relative to the original Apoſtolic form of Church government, began ſtill to queſtion, whether it was ſuch a *ſine quâ non* as might not be diſpenſed with. Le Clerc has exhibited a ſtrong ſpecimen of this accommodation of ſentiment to the changing circumſtances of times. Profeſſing, in one page of his writings, "to believe Epiſcopacy to be of Apoſtolical

* Theſe Diſcourſes are now collected together in three vols. octavo, under the title of "*the London Caſes.*"

inſtitution, and conſequently very good and lawful; that it was juſtly preſerved in England; and that therefore the Proteſtants in England, and in other places where there are biſhops, do very ill to ſeparate from that diſcipline, becauſe nothing is more proper to prevent things from being turned into chaos, and people from being ſeen without a call, and without learning, pretending to inſpiration, than the Epiſcopal diſcipline:" with this belief in his mind, on the ſubject of Epiſcopacy, Le Clerc, in another part of his works, writes thus: "It is nothing to the purpoſe to ſhew that Chriſt and his Apoſtles inſtituted this form of Church government, and that the Church never had any other kind of government in it for above fifteen hundred years, from our Saviour's days downwards; which, though it be ſo clearly evidenced, that the truth of it cannot be denied; yet it is of no weight, nor deſerves to be regarded. For thoſe who would make the hierarchy neceſſary to the conſtitution of the Chriſtian Church, ought to prove, that GOD inſtituted Chriſtianity for the ſake of the Epiſcopal order; and that the Epiſcopal order was not inſtituted for the ſake of Chriſtianity. For if this order was appointed for the ſake of the Church, (which they cannot deny) they muſt alſo acknowledge, that if it be more advantageous to the Church in ſome places to have this order aboliſhed, it is not amiſs to lay it aſide in ſuch places." Now to us it appears, that there is nothing neceſſary either to be

proved or acknowledged on this ſubject; but ſomething highly neceſſary to be conſidered; namely, that as GOD, that all-wiſe Being, "who ſeeth the end from the beginning," was, by his Apoſtles, the inſtitutor of the government of his own Church, (a kingdom not of this world;) it is to be in humility concluded, that no form that man might ſubſtitute in its place, would equally anſwer the purpoſe; and conſequently that it could not prove more advantageous to the Church in any place, that the divinely-inſtituted form of its government ſhould be aboliſhed. Although therefore we make the hierarchy neceſſary to the conſtitution of the Chriſtian Church, *becauſe* it has been divinely inſtituted; we are not obliged to prove that GOD inſtituted Chriſtianity for the ſake of the Epiſcopal order; nor ſhould we expect to be called upon for ſuch proof by any man of competent underſtanding; it is ſufficient for us to ſay, that the government of the Church, in its original form, was inſtituted for the ſake of Chriſtianity, to preſerve its truth in the world; for from thence it will follow, that *for the ſake of Chriſtianity*, in other words, for the the ſecurity of the *ſame divine object*, it ought to be preſerved. "We do not ſay, that Chriſtianity was inſtituted for the ſake of the outward polity of the Church, or the Church for the ſake of the Epiſcopal order; but we may juſtly ſay, what is plainly ſaid in Scripture, and was conſtantly profeſſed in the pureſt ages of the Goſpel, that the belief of "the Holy

Catholic Church" being a part of the faith which Chriſtianity requires, and the Epiſcopal order a part of what we are taught to believe concerning the conſtitution and government of the Church, no ſeparation muſt be attempted of what our GOD and Saviour has thus joined together."* And this, it might be preſumed, ſhould be enough to ſay to any reaſonable and modeſt Chriſtian on the ſubject.

But error cannot be ſtationary; it is conſtantly proceeding from bad to worſe; the breach at which the waters enter is continually growing wider, till the inundation becomes univerſal. That looſeneſs of opinion on the ſubject of Church government, which the original ſeparation from the Apoſtolic form of it by degrees introduced, appears at length to be arrived at the *ne plus ultra* of eccleſiaſtic inſubordination: for we are now, at the end of the eighteenth Century, told by a Profeſſor in a Church which has been generally diſtinguiſhed by the ſtrictneſs of its diſcipline, that "the firſt order given to the Eleven to make converts, to baptize, and to teach, carries in it nothing from which we can diſcover that it was a *commiſſion* entruſted to them *excluſively* as *Apoſtles* or *Miniſters*, and not given them alſo as *Chriſtians*; and that the Apoſtles were particularized, becauſe beſt qualified, from their long attendance on Chriſt's miniſtry, for

* See Biſhop SKINNER's excellent Defence of Epiſcopacy againſt the attack made on it by the late Dr. CAMPBELL, under the title of "Primitive Truth and Order vindicated," &c.

promoting his religion in the world; but not with a view to exclude any Chriſtians, who were capable, from co-operating with them in the ſame good cauſe." —CAMPBELL, vol. i. p. 118.

Nothing but the eagerneſs to maintain, at all events, a favourite hypotheſis, could, it may be ſuppoſed, have prevented the able refuter of the ſophiſtical HUME from adverting to the particular circumſtances which accompanied the original delivery of the Apoſtolic commiſſion, and thence perceiving the objection to which ſuch a mode of reaſoning is palpably obnoxious. The word *commiſſion*, from the verb *committo*, which in one of its leading ſenſes ſignifies to entruſt, to give in charge, is thus illuſtrated by AINSWORTH, from Cicero: "Rem magnam difficilemque alicui committere." But according to Dr. CAMPBELL'S uſe of this word, as applied to our SAVIOUR'S commiſſion delivered to his Apoſtles, we are to underſtand by it a commiſſion of no charge or office to particular perſons, which might not be freely aſſumed and exerciſed *by all*; a ſenſe, which if we miſtake not, totally evacuates its eſtabliſhed and peculiar meaning. We cannot, indeed, be ſurpriſed, that a miniſter, unable to trace his own commiſſion from the proper fountain, ſhould attempt to perſuade the world, that no commiſſion has been delivered, but what may be indiſcriminately exerciſed; ſuch a principle does not ſeem to be an improbable conſequence of the original deviation from Apoſtolic practice. But that

ſuch a *latitudinarian* principle ſhould have been inculcated by a Profeſſor from a theological chair, of which he claimed *exclusive* poſſeſſion by virtue of a commiſſion delivered to him for that purpoſe; and in a courſe of lectures, one principal object of which appears to have been the maintenance of the Preſbyterian form of Church government, againſt the original Apoſtolical one of Epiſcopacy, is what could not have been believed, had not the fact been eſtabliſhed by record. But were Dr. C. ſtill living, we would take the liberty to aſk one ſhort queſtion; which, if he could anſwer ſatisfactorily, we might begin to think his mode of reaſoning on this occaſion entitled to attention. If the particular appointment of certain choſen individuals, ſelected from a numerous body, to an important office, (as was the caſe in our SAVIOUR's delivery of the commiſſion to his Apoſtles) carries in it nothing in which we can diſcover a commiſſion for their *excluſive* exerciſe of that office; it may be aſked, on the principle that an all-wiſe Being does nothing in vain, why did ſuch a particular appointment take place?

Had Profeſſor CAMPBELL been a member of the *corps diplomatique*, and in that character written a treatiſe on the rights and privileges of ambaſſadors; and adopting a mode of reaſoning ſimilar to that here made uſe of, had he maintained, that the royal appointment of a certain individual to the repreſentative office of an ambaſſador carried in it nothing, from

which we could diſcover any right to the EXCLUSIVE exerciſe of that office; but that, notwithſtanding this particular appointment, the office ſtill remained open to be exerciſed, *ad libitum*, by any individual who might think himſelf qualified to undertake it, or to aſſiſt in it; his brethren of the corps, it is preſumed, would conſider his treatiſe to be as little entitled to their thanks, as his argument was to their notice.

The able Reviewer of Dr. CAMPBELL'S work in the Anti-Jacobin has illuſtrated the Doctor's mode of reaſoning on this occaſion by a different ſimilitude; which, as it may ſtrike ſome readers more forcibly, is here ſubjoined. "It is not probable (ſays the Reviewer) that his Majeſty's commiſſion to the Preſident of the Supreme Court of Law in Scotland, *expreſsly prohibits* all other lawyers from executing that office to which it appoints him; and it is certainly not improbable, that there are many lawyers at the Scotch bar perfectly well qualified to preſide over any court of law in that part of the united kingdom. Yet what would Dr. C. have thought of the man, who, having formed opinions of the courts of law ſimilar to thoſe which he had formed of the conſtitution of the Chriſtian Church, ſhould have ſaid, "There is nothing in the commiſſion given *to the Preſident of the Court of Seſſion*, from which we can diſcover, that it is a commiſſion entruſted to him *excluſively as a judge*, and not given to him alſo as a lawyer; and that he is particularized in it, only be-

cauſe he is beſt qualified for diſcharging the duties of the office; but not with a view to *exclude* any lawyer, who is capable, from occaſionally taking poſſeſſion of his chair, and preſiding with authority over the court."

Either of the above ſimilitudes, it is preſumed, is ſufficient to expoſe the weakneſs of the ground on which the reaſoning of Dr. C. ſtands; though it may prove inſufficient to counteract the prevalency of the falſe principle built upon it. For unhappily, it is not the eſtabliſhment of truth, ſo much as the ſupport of *opinion*, that the generality of mankind are anxious to ſecure; and as the world is now circumſtanced, the more *latitudinarian* that opinion is, the more welcome will be its reception. We are not, therefore, ſurpriſed to find the principle here alluded to daily gaining ground; and profeſſed members of the Church becoming tools in the hands of thoſe whoſe object it is to undermine it, by admitting the government of the Church to be a matter of "*doubtful opinion*;" and conſequently, that the communion of one claſs of Chriſtians may be equally ſcriptural with that of any other.

But by a matter of *doubtful opinion* we underſtand a matter, which, upon competent inveſtigation, does not furniſh ſufficient evidence to determine the judgment on either ſide. On ſuch a matter a difference of opinion muſt ſubſiſt; and where it does, it is its own juſtification. For men may differ about an *opinion*, without either breach of charity, or of the unity of the

Church; which requires not that all ſhould preciſely be of the ſame opinion, but of the *ſame communion*; and for this evident reaſon, becauſe no difference of opinion among Chriſtians, concerning matters *really doubtful* or *not eſſential*, can juſtify the poſitive ſin of ſciſm. But if any point be admitted to be a *doubtful* one, only becauſe a difference of opinion exiſts upon it, whether the point in queſtion relate to the conſtitution of the Church or its doctrine, the human mind muſt be left in an equal ſtate of general indeciſion with reſpect to its religious concerns. A ſtate of mind which will ultimately introduce that dangerous error, to which MELANCTHON looked forward with ſerious apprehenſion. "It was to be feared," he ſaid, "that the time would come, wherein men would be tainted with this error; either that religion is a matter of nothing, or that the differences of religion are merely verbal."

It is true indeed, with reſpect to points on which there is no determining ſtandard of appeal, an opinion will be right or wrong, according to the order or caprice of the day; and what was right to day may, in conformity to the fluctuation of the public mind, be wrong to-morrow. But the queſtion is, does the point under conſideration admit of proof? And has that proof been fairly appreciated? If it have not, the perſons who, by occaſional communion with different bodies of Chriſtians, think proper to act, as ſome members of the Church do, on the ſup-

poſed ground of Church government being a ſubject of "*doubtful* opinion," at the ſame time that they are to be taken as no judges in the caſe, pronounce, by their conduct, the ſevereſt ſentence on their own negligence, and muſt be anſwerable for the conſequences to which it may lead.

As this is both a ſerious and important ſubject, it ſhould be conſidered ſeriouſly; and, as far as poſſible, abſtractedly from all perſonal conſiderations and prejudices. In fact, this ſubject is to be determined only by the word of GOD, and the practice of the Church originally built upon it. For next to the Divine inſtitution, Catholic practice conſtitutes the baſis of the power and order of Epiſcopacy. What government was therefore inſtituted by the Apoſtles, delivered to their immediate ſucceſſors, and univerſally eſtabliſhed in the Church, ſuppoſing that capable of being aſcertained, muſt conſtitute the ſtandard, to which all future judgment on this head ought in reaſon to conform: on the conſideration, that no judgment of the preſent members of the Church can come in competition with it; becauſe no preſent members of the Church ſtand on the ſame ground with the Apoſtles, and their immediate ſucceſſors, with reſpect to the *data*, from which alone a judgment on this ſubject is decidedly to be formed.

The reaſoning which latitudinarianiſm has by degrees introduced into this ſubject, however plauſibly it may ſound to uninformed minds, is certainly replete with

dangerous fallacy. Provided, we are told, the *eſſentials* of religion are ſecured, what are deemed the *circumſtantials* of it are no longer conſidered worthy attention. From which general premiſes it is concluded, that, provided Chriſtians hear the Goſpel, and become pious perſons, it is a matter of no importance on *what miniſtry* they attend. With truly pious perſons, of whatever denomination, every faithful miniſter of CHRIST's Church muſt cordially wiſh to be united; for true piety is that gracious quality of the human heart, which at all times challenges reſpect. But it may be aſked, we truſt without offence, whether it can be any recommendation even of *true piety*, that it ſhould be eccentric: or, whether *true piety* become leſs ſo than it really is, or in any degree ſink in the ſcale of eſtimation, by being accompanied with a due regard to order and obedience? To us it appears, that of two ſuppoſed equal degrees of piety, that of the party who lives in communion with the Church is to be preferred to that of the perſon who ſeparates from it; on the ground of his piety being accompanied with that humility, which, in conformity with the Apoſtolic injunction, has preſerved its poſſeſſor in ſubmiſſion to the authority appointed to rule over him. We know that the firſt open rebellion againſt eſtabliſhed order in the Jewiſh Church, though grounded on the holineſs of the parties, was followed with the moſt ſignal mark of the Divine diſpleaſure. And there is no paſſage in Scripture from which it

can be concluded, that ſimilar rebellion in the Chriſtian Church, is not equally offenſive to its Divine Founder; though the crime be not attended with conſequences equally prompt and deciſive.

But it may be further aſked of thoſe Chriſtians, who thus diſcriminate between the *eſſentials* and the *circumſtantials* of religion, where they draw the line between what is to be regarded of *eſſential* obligation to Chriſtians, and what is not? or by what criterion their judgment on this head is determined? Should the government of the Church be reckoned among their *non-eſſentials*, and conſequently a matter of indifference, as from the practice of the day we have too much reaſon to conclude, we muſt ſay, that we are at a loſs to underſtand, how a government that has received the ſanction of Divine appointment, ("*divinâ lege fundatum*," ſays CYPRIAN) can be ſeen in this light. But excluſive of this conſideration, which ſhould of itſelf, it might be ſuppoſed, preclude every ſeeming objection on this head; the great object which the government of the Church was deſigned to ſecure, proclaims the wiſdom of its eſtabliſhment. The Apoſtle calls the Church "the pillar and ground of the truth:" 1 Tim. iii. 15. "Στυλος και εδραιωμα;" a pillar, and the baſis of that pillar: in other words, a pillar upon its baſis, firmly ſuſtaining that which was built upon it. The ſimilitude is taken from ancient houſes, built on pillars placed firmly on their baſes, for the ſupport of the

incumbent building. Thus the Church is conſidered as a pillar erected on the baſis or foundation of JESUS CHRIST and his Apoſtles; for the purpoſe of ſuſtaining and upholding the truth, which, as a ſuperſtructure, has been raiſed upon it. In conformity to this idea is the following deſcription of the Church at Epheſus: "Now, then, (ſays the Apoſtle writing to his Epheſian diſciples) ye are no more ſtrangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſhold of GOD; and are built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone. In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the LORD."* "If (ſays the learned HAMMOND) the truth of the Goſpel had been ſcattered abroad by preaching to ſingle men, and thoſe men never compacted together into a ſociety, under the government of biſhops or ſtewards, &c. ſuch as Timothy was, to whom was delivered by St. Paul that παραϰαθηϰη, that *depoſitum*, or body of ſound doctrine, 1 Tim. vi. 20, to be kept as a ſtandard in the Church, by which all other doctrines were to be meaſured and judged; if, I ſay, ſuch a ſummary of faith had not been delivered to all Chriſtians that came in, in any place, to the Apoſtles preaching; and if there had not been ſome ſteward to keep it; then had there wanted an eminent means to ſuſtain and uphold this truth of the Goſpel, thus preached

* Ephes. ii. 20.

unto men. But by the gathering of ſingle converted Chriſtians into aſſemblies or churches, and appointing governors in thoſe churches, and entruſting this *depoſitum*, or *form of wholeſome doctrine*, to their keeping, it comes to paſs, that the Chriſtian truth is ſuſtained and held up; and ſo this houſe of GOD is affirmed to be "the pillar and baſis of the truth;" or "the pillar on that divine baſis by which truth is ſupported."

And hence it is that St. IGNATIUS, (who, St. CHRYSOSTOM informs us, received his ordination from the hands of the Apoſtles themſelves, and conſequently muſt have been inſtructed by them) inſiſts ſo much on the indiſpenſible neceſſity of communion with the biſhop; becauſe he conſidered that form of doctrine depoſited with, and kept by the biſhop in the Church, as the only ſure means to ſupport and preſerve the truth. And ſuch, in the early days of the Church, was conſidered to be that eſtabliſhed mode of proof, by which the truth was to be effectually aſcertained againſt heretics; namely, by tracing the form of ſound doctrine, through its ſeveral ſucceſſive depoſitaries, the governors of the Church, up to its original Apoſtolic ſource. On this eſtabliſhed principle IRENÆUS built his argument againſt the heretics of his day. "We can reckon up (ſaid he) thoſe who were by the Apoſtles ordained biſhops in the churches, and thoſe who were their ſucceſſors, even to our own time. They never taught nor knew any of the wild opinions of theſe men; and had the Apoſtles known

any hidden myſteries, which they imparted to none but the perfect, (as the heretics pretend) they would have committed them with particular care to thoſe perſons, to whom they committed the churches themſelves. For they would be extremely deſirous, that thoſe ſhould be perfect, and unreproveable in all things, whom they left to be their ſucceſſors, and to whom they conſigned their own authority."* And afterwards, ſpeaking with immediate reference to the Church of Rome, as the largeſt, moſt ancient, and then beſt-known, church in the world; he proceeds thus: "By ſhewing forth the tradition received from the Apoſtles, and the faith delivered to mankind, and deſcended even to us by means of the ſucceſſions of thoſe biſhops, (to whom that Church has been committed) we confound all theſe heretics."† TERTULLIAN argues againſt heretics in a ſimilar way, where he ſays, "that the true knowledge of the Apoſtolic doctrine, of the ancient ſtate of the Church, together with that of the character of the body of CHRIST, was preſerved in the whole world by the

* "Habemus annumerare eos, qui ab Apoſtolis inſtituti ſunt Epiſcopi in eccleſiis, et ſucceſſiones eorum uſque ad nos, qui nil tale docuerunt neque cognoverunt, quale ab his delıratur. Etenim ſi recondita myſteria ſciſſent Apoſtoli, quæ ſeorſim et latenter ab reliquis perfectos docebant, his vel maximè traderent ea, quibus etiam ipſas eccleſias committebant. Valde enim perfectos et irreprehenſibiles in omnibus eos volebent eſſe, quos et ſucceſſores relinquebant, ſuum ipſorum locum magiſterii tradentes.—IREN. lib. iii. c. 3.

† "Eam quam habet ab Apoſtolis traditionem, et annunciatam hominibus fidem *per ſucceſſiones Epiſcoporum* pervenientem uſque ad nos, indicantes confundimus omnes eos, &c."—IREN. lib. iii. c. 3.

ſucceſſion of biſhops, to whom the Church in every place had been committed."* And numberleſs are the teſtimonies to be produced from the ancient fathers, particularly from the writings of St. AUGUSTINE againſt the Donatiſts, to prove the principle of the Church being in their days conſidered as the foundation of the true faith, though it be inconſiſtent with the nature of a preface to bring them forward.

From hence it appears, that the Church, under its appointed governors, is to be conſidered as a faithful regiſter, or notary, whoſe office it is to preſerve the original records of its charter from corruption. It is called in Scripture, as we have already obſerved, and for the reaſon above given, "*the pillar of the truth.*" In the book of *Revelations* it is called *a candleſtick*, whoſe office it is to hold and preſerve the light. Now, remove the pillar, the building falls into ruin. Throw down the candleſtick, the light will be thrown down with it, and moſt probably extinguiſhed.

This Apoſtolic government of the Church then, however lightly it may be now eſteemed, by perſons who have formed their judgment on this ſubject more from the opinions of men, than from the revelations of GOD, appears to be of moſt *eſſential* importance, in the preſervation of thoſe very eſſentials, which many of thoſe, who erroneouſly conſider Church govern-

* "Agnitio vera eſt Apoſtolorum doctrina, et antiquus eccleſiæ ſtatus in univerſo mundo, et character corporis CHRISTI *ſecundum ſucceſſiones Epiſcoporum*, quibus illi eam quæ in unoquoque loco eſt, eccleſiam tradiderent, quæ pervenit uſque ad nos."—Lib. iv. c. 63.

ment to be a matter of indifference, would be thought moſt anxious to ſecure; becauſe it is the only ſure ſtandard, by which the authenticity of thoſe eſſentials is to be aſcertained. For, remove this ſtandard, which the regular derivation of Apoſtolic truth, through the continued channel of the Church, has ſet up; and it may be aſked, what criterion will remain, of authority competent to determine between the contending opinions of different ſects, all of which will not fail to be equally confident in their reſpective tenets? In ſuch caſe, the concluſion drawn will not fail to be to the diſadvantage of religion in general. "Ye diſſent among yourſelves, (ſaid CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, ſpeaking of the objections thrown out againſt the Chriſtian religion by the infidels of his day) and maintain ſo many ſects; which ſects, notwithſtanding they all claim the title of Chriſtian religion, yet one of them curſeth and condemneth another. And therefore your religion is not true, nor hath its begining or ground from GOD."* In fact, however diſtant the event may be, the conſequence of removing the ſtandard of Church authority, by which the genuine doctrine committed to the Apoſtles is capable of being aſcertained, and thereby giving countenance to the wild notion that every man is left at liberty to form his own Church, and

* Vos Chriſtiani diſſidetis inter vos, et tot ſectas habetis; quæ licet omnes Chriſtianiſmi titulum ſibi vindicent, tamen alia aliam execratur et condemnat. Quare veſtra religio vera non eſt, nec a Deo originem ducit."—CLEMEN. Stromat. lib. vii.

make his own creed, muſt ultimately terminate in that general indifference, which is but one degree removed from downright infidelity. An indifference, which the enemies of Chriſtianity have been enabled to recommend with too much ſucceſs, on the ground of that uncertainty which muſt apparently attach to a ſubject, concerning which men are ſo infinitely divided among themſelves in opinion. And "when," (as a ſound divine of our Church has obſerved) "through our own weakneſs, we have thus given an opportunity to artful and unworthy men, to ſow the ſeeds of *confuſion, and every evil work*; are we to wonder, that GOD ſhould at length be provoked to ſuffer thoſe who cannot agree with one another, to be deſtroyed of one another?"* Since then (as St. AUGUSTINE† has obſerved) "where GOD doth build his city, the Devil will have another hard by to confront it;" or in the language of LUTHER, "Where CHRIST erecteth his Church, the Devil will have his chapel;" it becomes matter for moſt ſerious conſideration with thoſe who ſeem indifferent to the diviſions prevailing among Chriſtians, whether any ſtate of things in the Chriſtian world can be more deſirable to the grand enemy of the Church, whoſe continued object it is to coun-

* BOUCHER'S Diſcourſes, p. 67.

† "When Satan," (ſaith AUGUSTINE in another part of his writings) "ſaw his temples forſaken, and that his oracles were all put to ſilence, he cunningly deviſed for a new ſupply, to have always his miniſters in or about the Church: qui ſub vocabulo Chriſtiano doctrinæ reſiſterent Chriſtianæ—who under a Chriſtian name might reſiſt the Chriſtian doctrine."—AUGUST. de Civit. DEI; lib. xviii. c. 51.

teract, and thereby deſtroy, its gracious deſign, than to ſee the increaſing growth of hereſy and ſchiſm; and Chriſtians ſeeking to know the truth, at the ſame time that, in conſequence of the diſtraction of men's minds on the ſubject, they are at a loſs where to find it. And theſe perſons, who by their looſe conduct are inſtrumental in removing the government of the Church from its Apoſtolic foundation, and placing it on the waves, the fluctuating opinion of the people, would do well to conſider further; that, however ſincere their zeal may be for the *eſſentials* of Chriſtianity, they are ſetting up their judgment againſt that of GOD, by ſeeking to preſerve them in a way different from that which has been in wiſdom appointed for the purpoſe: in which caſe it is to be feared, that whilſt they think themſelves promoting the cauſe of GOD in the world, it will ultimately be found, that they have been, alas! unconſciouſly employed in a very different ſervice.

The foregoing reaſoning ſtands ſufficiently confirmed by the hiſtory of facts, to claim the attention of every conſiderate man. It was (we are told) in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, and every man did what was right in his own eyes, that Micah introduced a ſeparate houſe, a ſeparate prieſthood, and a ſeparate religion, from his country. And when the ten tribes, in conſequence of their revolt, ſeparated from the eſtabliſhed worſhip at Jeruſalem, they fell into thoſe numberleſs idolatries, which at

length led to their captivity and diſperſion. It was alſo when there was no king in *our Israel*, and when, in conſequence of the Apoſtolic government of the Church being ſuperſeded among us by an overbearing faction, every man did what was right in his own eyes; that ſixty different ſects prevailed in this land, preſenting ſuch a motley religion, as left the greater part of its inhabitants without any ſound notions on the ſubject. It ſtands moreover upon record, that DURY, one of the leading and moſt zealous patrons of preſbytery, and MELVILL's principal inſtrument in eſtabliſhing that form of Church government in Scotland; as if twenty years' experience had furniſhed him with full conviction of the truth of JEROM's aſſertion, that biſhops were originally placed at the head of the Church, that the ſeeds of ſchiſm might be taken away, ("*ut ſchiſmatum* ſemina tollerentur;") left the following teſtimony on his death-bed in favour of the original Apoſtolic government. When ſome brethren came to viſit him, he requeſted them to tell the Aſſembly as from him, "that there was neceſſity of reſtoring the *ancient government* of the Church, becauſe of the unrulineſs of the young miniſters, who would not be adviſed by the elder ſort, nor kept in order. And ſince both the ſtate of the Church did require it, and the King did labour for it, he wiſhed them to make no trouble therefore, but only to inſiſt with the King, that the beſt miniſters, and of greateſt experience, might be preferred to

places."* And there is a curious circumſtance in favour of Epiſcopacy, not perhaps generally known, recorded by Mr. JONES in his life of Biſhop HORNE, informing us, that JOHN WESLEY, a ſemi-ſeparatiſt from the Church of England, and the founder of a numerous ſect, inveſted two miniſters with the Epiſcopal character, (at leaſt ſo far as he was capable of ſo doing) and in that capacity ſent them over to America. The reaſon for this conduct, according to his own acknowledgment, was "to prevent diſorders and confuſions among his *poor people* (as he called them) in America, now all religious connexion between this country and the colonies was at an end." An anecdote, which fully proves, that unity had, in Mr. WESLEY's opinion, been preſerved among his people by their relation to the Epiſcopacy of the Church of England; from which neither he nor they did ever profeſs themſelves to be in a ſtate of ſeparation. And although Mr. WESLEY had not himſelf profited by the opinion delivered by the celebrated Mr. LAW† on the eccentricity of his enthuſiaſtic un-

* SKINNER's "Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory of Scotland;" vol. ii. p. 236.

† When JOHN and CHARLES WESLEY began their new miniſtry, one of them went to conſult with Mr. LAW, as a perſon of profound judgment in ſpiritual matters; and when the caſe had been opened, and the intention explained, Mr. LAW made anſwer, "Mr. WESLEY, if you wiſh to reform the world, and ſpread the Goſpel, you muſt undertake the work in the ſame ſpirit as you would take a curacy in the Peak of Derbyſhire; but if you pretend to a *new commiſſion*, and go forth in the ſpirit and power of an Apoſtle, your ſcheme will end in Bedlam."—JONES's Life of Biſhop HORNE, p. 187.

dertaking, he was ſtill wiſe enough to ſee that the eſtabliſhment of the Epiſcopal Church government was the only plan, by which the irregularities of a licentious miniſtry were to be prevented.

But excluſive of the concluſion to which the foregoing conſiderations will, if permitted, lead the intelligent reader, there is one circumſtance, admitting it to ſtand on firm ground, which ought to ſhut up all controverſy on this ſubject.

The commiſſion, by virtue of which the Apoſtles and their ſucceſſors became governors of the Church, originally proceeded from the head of the Church: it conſequently conveyed an inveſtiture of authority from the only Fountain, from whence authority in ſpiritual matters is to be derived. "As my father ſent me, (ſaid CHRIST to his diſciples, the Apoſtles) ſo ſend I you." And from the circumſtance of the original delivery of the Apoſtolic commiſſion being accompanied with a declaration, which plainly imported the continuance of it to the end of the world; the Church has reaſonably and univerſally concluded, as might be proved from the moſt unanſwerable evidence, that it was the Divine intention, that *this ſame commiſſion*, for the accompliſhment of the ſame divine object, ſhould accompany the Church through every ſtage of its progreſs. In conformity with this admitted and eſtabliſhed principle, the governors of the Church of England have uniformly proceeded in their *authoritative* delegation of the miniſterial

office. Either then this commiſſion, thus regularly handed down to us, is ſtill in force, or not. If it be, all authority in the Church muſt continue to be derived from it. If it be not, it is incumbent on thoſe who act on this preſumption, by aſſuming a miniſterial office in the Church, independent of any *authoritative* appointment, to inform us, at what period this commiſſion determined; becauſe, if it be determined, the Church and its miniſtry are determined with it.

GOD, it is certain, can be bound only by himſelf; or by perſons deputed and commiſſioned by him to engage in his name. The Sacraments are the ſeals of that covenant, in CHRIST by which GOD hath thought fit to be bound. The adminiſtration of them CHRIST formally committed to his Apoſtles, and their ſucceſſors, for the benefit of his Church to the end of time. The validity of theſe ſeals depending, therefore, on the *commiſſion* of the adminiſtering party, it follows, that where *this commiſſion*, originally delivered by our Saviour, and by his authority ſucceſſively continued in the Church, does not actually ſubſiſt, there the ſacraments adminiſtered are not ſeals of the Divine covenant, but muſt be conſidered in the light of *human ordinances*.

This circumſtance of the ſtewardſhip of the Divine myſteries being vacated, whereby the regularly-eſtabliſhed adminiſtration of the Evangelical covenant comes to an end in the world, is a circumſtance, that ſhould weigh down all the comparative trifling con-

ſiderations, which are ſuffered to diſtract the minds of diſſenting Chriſtians at any period. In all churches are to be found ſpeculative opinions, concerning which a layman, who is not obliged to ſubſcribe the public confeſſion of faith, need give himſelf very little trouble to enquire, whether they are true or falſe. But a defect in the miſſion of the miniſters of the goſpel invalidates the ſacraments, affects the purity of public worſhip, and can therefore be no ſubject of indifference, as points of *doubtful opinion* are generally concluded to be; but a ſubject of *primary* and *eſſential* importance to every Chriſtian profeſſor. It has been ſaid indeed, with a view, it is preſumed, to that accommodating ſyſtem which the Church of England is now perſuaded to adopt, on the principle of every thing being doubtful concerning which a difference of opinion exiſts, (whether the ſubject under conſideration has been fairly examined, or not;) that "when numbers are againſt the Eſtabliſhment, the ſcale will turn; and if we do not buttreſs up our Eſtabliſhment with thoſe who are ſeparated from it, the fabric muſt fall." This language we certainly underſtand, when made uſe of with reference to the repreſentation of his nation in a Britiſh Houſe of Parliament; but when applied to the Church of CHRIST, we as certainly do not: becauſe, with the conſtitution of the Chriſtian Church numbers can have nothing to do. And it muſt be to a want of information ſufficient to diſtinguiſh between the Church of Chriſt as a ſpiritual

ſociety, *abſtractedly conſidered*, and the eſtabliſhment of that Church, *politically conſidered*, that the ſcioliſts of the preſent day ſtand indebted for ſuch a palpable confuſion of ideas on this ſubject. Whether the political eſtabliſhment of the Church ſtand or fall, the Church itſelf, ſo long as God ſhall think fit to preſerve it in any country, will remain, as to its *conſtitution*, what it originally was, firm on its own Divine foundation. When thoſe who are now ſeparated from the Church ſhall be diſpoſed, from conviction, to return into her boſom, the Church, as a tender mother, muſt with joy receive them, as ſtrayed ſheep returning to "the Shepherd and Biſhop of their ſouls." But in ſuch caſe, ſhe receives them to a conformity with her doctrine, and a due obedience to her diſcipline. To receive them on any other plan, would be to attempt to form an uniform ſociety out of heterogeneous and diſcordant parts; a ſociety, which, on the ſuppoſition that it could be brought together, and by whatever political eſtabliſhment it might be ſecured, muſt, from the nature of its compoſition, neceſſarily crumble into early diſſolution, for want of that principle of unity, which is the cement of the Chriſtian Church, namely, a ſtedfaſt continuance "*in the Apoſtles' doctrine and fellowſhip.*" Whereas this unity, on which the very exiſtence of the Church, as a divinely-conſtituted ſociety, depends, according to the looſe and generalizing notions of ſome modern interpreters, (with the

view of accommodating the word to thoſe multifarious ſeparations from the Church, which they appear intereſted to ſupport) "conſiſts not in the viſible union of members in *one community*, but in that great unity of the members of Chriſt's body, diſperſed over all parts of the earth, viſibly united to *communities of different perſuaſions*."* Now, though we do not take upon ourſelves to explain, how the members of CHRIST's body, the Church, which is deſcribed "as a city that is at unity in itſelf," can be viſibly united to "*communities of different perſuaſions*," and ſtill remain members of a community united in itſelf; becauſe we have always regarded the union and diviſion of the ſame body as conditions impoſſible, in the nature of things, to *co-exiſt*; yet we may be conſidered as diſcharging a part of our duty to the reader, in thus furniſhing him with a ſpecimen of that confuſion of ideas, and miſconſtruction of meaning, by which ſo many ſincere tho' unſuſpecting Chriſtians are continually led away from the plain unſophiſticated language of their bibles, which, if ſuffered to ſpeak for itſelf, would rarely fail to preſerve them ſound members of the Church.

Impreſſed by a deep and repeated attention to the principles of the preſent times, and looking almoſt with an eye of deſpondency to that deſtruction of eſtabliſhments, which ſuch principles, if not timely counteracted, muſt ultimately effect, I feel myſelf, as

* Critical Review, March 1799, on the "Guide to the Church."

a Miniſter of the Church, juſtified in bringing forward to the conſideration of every ſerious and thinking man the important ſubject of the following work.

In this mind, oppoſing patient inveſtigation, Chriſtian firmneſs and charity, to haſtineſs of deciſion, to ignorance and ſlander; I have taken the ground on which a Miniſter of the Church of England ought to ſtand; and on which, provided he be not wanting to himſelf, he may ever ſtand firm; by defending our Eccleſiaſtical government on the high ground of *Apoſtolical Inſtitution*. The language made uſe of for the purpoſe has been that, which I have for the moſt part learned from my mother, the Church; a language, which were I, in times like the preſent, to withhold from fear of giving offence, I ſhould be unworthy the character in which I glory, that of being her dutiful ſon. In ſtating the authority derived from the Apoſtles to thoſe ſacred perſons to whom the miniſtry of reconciliation has been committed, my object has been to preſs on the minds of my readers the importance of the enquiry heretofore ſuggeſted by the judicious HOOKER: "Whether, as we are to believe *for ever* the articles of Evangelical Doctrine, ſo the precepts of Diſcipline we are not in like ſort bound for ever to obſerve?"

It is not, I will venture to ſay, from an improper prejudice in favour of names and diſtinctions, nor from a narrow notion that the affairs of CHRIST'S kingdom may not be adminiſtered under any govern-

ment different from that which has been actually eſtabliſhed, that my concluſion on this ſubject has been drawn; but from the ſettled conviction, that what Divine Wiſdom ordains muſt, in *this* as in every other caſe, be beſt calculated to promote the object which Divine Goodneſs has in view. It being therefore, in our judgment at leaſt, a matter capable of demonſtration, that the *Apoſtolic conſtitution* of the Church was the proviſion made, under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, for the preſervation of true religion in the world; for *this reaſon* it is, that we look up to the circumſtantials of order and government, as they exiſt in the Epiſcopal Church of this country, (conſidered as a branch of the Catholic Church of Chriſt) as to means divinely appointed for the purpoſe of conducing to that important end. And it is to be deeply lamented, that Chriſtians of the preſent day ſeem, for the moſt part, not to be acquainted with the fundamental conſtitution of the Church, nor ſufficiently to have attended to the conſequences of rebellion againſt it, to be duly ſenſible of its value. It is, however, incumbent on us to remark, what the teſtimony of almoſt three centuries has now proved; that to the Eſtabliſhment of the Apoſtolic conſtitution of the Church in this country, we are, under Providence, indebted for the maintenance of primitive truth among us, aſſailed as it has been by every mode of attack, and by every diverſity of ſect. And it is to the poſſeſſion of this Eſtabliſhment, provided the

Clergy of it be faithful to their important truſt, and the members of it manifeſt a due regard for that Chriſtian unity, which the Apoſtles ſo ſolemnly enjoined, that this country will be indebted for the preſervation of that character, which the general voice of Europe once conferred upon it, of being *the Eye of the Reformation*; and our excellent Church continue, what at that period it was deſervedly conſidered to be, the glory of all churches.

My Preface might here conclude; ſufficient, it is preſumed, having been ſaid in it to demonſtrate the importance of the ſubject, which it is intended to introduce. But, as there are ſome words frequently employed in a perverted ſenſe, which, by creating an undue impreſſion on the mind, thereby prevent that fair enquiry into certain ſubjects, which might ultimately eſtabliſh truth; I crave indulgence, whilſt I detain my reader a few moments longer.

It is common with the world to pay more attention to *names* than to *things*; and writers are never wanting to take advantage of this too general weakneſs, by making the language of popular impreſſion their ſubſtitute for that of ſound reaſoning and legitimate proof; a ſpecious kind of writing, perfectly well ſuited to the indolence of the preſent readers, who, generally ſpeaking, have neither time, patience, nor candour of mind, fairly to examine received opinions to the bottom. In conſequence of this degradation of the mental powers, ſhould a Divine in theſe days venture

to write on professional subjects, as a sound member of the Church may be expected to write, he must make his account to have his character stamped with the titles of *bigot* and *high-churchman*; titles, which, whatever be their *proper* meaning, in the sense in which they are on such occasions to be taken, are certainly intended to disgrace the party to whom they are applied. But when, on turning to my dictionary, I find, that under the article *bigot*, I am to understand, on the authority of Dr. WATTS, "a man *unreasonably* devoted to a certain party or to certain opinions," I am at a loss to conceive with what propriety that title can attach to a Divine, whose opinions have been formed, not by any *blind* and *unreasonable* attachment to certain prejudices, but by the deliberate established judgment of the Church, of which he is a member; a judgment, which itself stands on the broad and firm ground of Scripture and primitive antiquity. And if the title of *high-churchman* conveys any meaning, beyond that of a decided and principled attachment to the Apostolic government of the Church, as originally established under the direction of the Holy Spirit by its divine Founder, (from whom alone a commission to minister in holy things can properly be derived;) it is a meaning, for which those must be answerable, who understand and maintain it; the sense annexed to that title, in my mind, containing in it nothing, but in what every sound minister of the Church of England ought to

glory. And when it is conſidered, that that conſtitution of the Chriſtian Church, for which we manifeſt our reverence, and in defence of which we have ventured to commit ourſelves to the public, has been acknowledged even by thoſe who are leaſt diſpoſed to commend it, to "have been from the beginning favourable to peace and good order, and ſubmiſſion to the Sovereign; and never been the occaſion of any civil commotion in any country in which it has been once eſtabliſhed;"* a principled attachment to ſuch a Church will, it is preſumed, by every well-wiſher to the community, be regarded as a more fit ſubject for reſpect and commendation, than for obloquy and reproach.

But it is ſaid, and the preſent liberal mode of thinking (as it is falſely called) ſanctions the idea, that to inſiſt on the *Apoſtolic form*, as the only Divine inſtitution of Church government, is to pronounce an uncharitable ſentence on all thoſe who do not conform to it; on the ground, that thoſe Chriſtians who are not *in* the Church, muſt neceſſarily be *out* of it; and as ſuch, unpoſſeſſed of a *covenanted* title to the promiſes made to the Church by its Divine Head. Now, admitting the conſequence in this caſe, it is certainly a conſequence for which the Clergy of the Church of England are not anſwerable. To be conſiſtent miniſters of that Church, they muſt argue conſiſtently from the premiſes which that Church has laid down.

* SMITH's "Wealth of Nations," b. viii. c. 1.

Admitting, then, that the concluſion drawn from theſe premiſes, may ſound harſh to the ears of thoſe who ſeparate from her communion, it ought ſtill not to offend them; becauſe it is that concluſion, which they muſt expect ſhould be drawn by every honeſt miniſter of the Church; at the ſame time that it is a conclúſion, by which thoſe who deny the validity of the premiſes in this caſe laid down, cannot conſider themſelves to be affected. The queſtion therefore is not, whether the Church of England has determined rightly, or otherwiſe, on this ſubject; but whether her miniſters do not act in ſtrict conformity with their character and duty, by inſtructing the members of that Church in the nature of the ſpiritual ſociety to which they belong, with the view of preventing them from ſinning ignorantly by needleſs ſeparation from it. At the ſame time, with reſpect to thoſe who are in an actual ſtate of ſeparation, we ſay with the Apoſtle, "what have we to do to judge them that are *without;* them which are without GOD judgeth," they are in the hands of that all-gracious and all-merciful Being, who judgeth righteous judgment; and to Him we leave them.

To thoſe therefore, who ſeem to conſider the delivery of any decided judgment on the conſtitution of the Church, and the ſubjects neceſſarily connected with it, to be inconſiſtent with Chriſtian charity, it may be proper to obſerve, that the moſt enlarged idea of toleration is perfectly conſiſtent with the moſt

ſtrenuous exertion in the cauſe of the Church; and that "the zeal," which is "according to knowledge," while it ſhuns the intemperance, which is as repugnant to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, as it is to the common feelings of mankind, ſtill finds itſelf properly employed, in contending earneſtly for the truth. It was the language of the primitive Church, that "it is no part of religion to force religion." "Non eſt religionis cogere religionem."* And, on following the hiſtory of the Chriſtian Church, from its earlieſt days down to the preſent time, it will be found, that to be *intolerant* and *uncharitable* has been more the characteriſtic of *error* than of *truth*. To contend earneſtly for the truth then, and to be wanting in charity towards thoſe who unhappily do not poſſeſs it, are diſpoſitions of the mind, between which there is certainly no neceſſary connection.

But if a miniſter of the Church is to refrain from teaching the fundamental principles of Church government, from a conſideration of thereby giving offence, by appearing to pronounce ſentence on thoſe who ſeparate from it; for the ſame reaſon he muſt refrain from inſiſting decidedly on any doctrine whatever; for there is no doctrine of the Church, which will not meet with parties to whom it is obnoxious. The preaching up, for inſtance, the being and providence of GOD, will be offenſive to atheiſts and worldlings, (of whom, it is to be feared, there is no

* TERTULLIAN ad SCAPULAM.

ſmall number;) becauſe they are thereby concluded under damning unbelief. The authority of the Scriptures, and the certainty of revealed religion, are points equally offenſive to deiſts and ſceptics. The union of the divine and human nature, as preparatory to the great work of atonement, is a doctrine not to be inſiſted upon; becauſe of its alarming conſequence to Arians, Socinians, and Unitarians. The doctrine of the Chriſtian Sacraments muſt, in like manner, be kept out of ſight; from fear of giving offence to that ſect among us, which is diſtinguiſhed, partly, by the rejection of the ſeals divinely appropriated to the Goſpel covenant.

This ſacrifice of principle, by the adoption of an accommodating ſyſtem, from a deſire of not giving offence, (which by a *miſnomer*, characteriſtic of the preſent age, is called *liberality*) certainly bears no affinity to that Chriſtian charity to which it pretends. For Chriſtian charity has for its primary object the ſalvation of ſouls; which is not to be effected by humouring men in their error, but by making them ſee it; and with this view, writing them *up* to the truth, inſtead of writing, as the manner of ſome hath been, the truth *down* to them. And the great excellence of Chriſtian charity conſiſts in its making a proper diſcrimination between the ſinner and the ſin; condemning unequivocally *the one*, whilſt it is at the ſame time deſirous of ſparing, and even doing all manner of good to *the other:* after the example of

our truly charitable SAVIOUR, who, tho' he ſeverely rebuked his diſciples for their deſire to call down fire on a village of Samaria, as a puniſhment for its refuſal to receive him; yet, when he had occaſion to ſpeak of the religion of its inhabitants, he did not admit that they were within the pale of the true Church; by decidedly declaring, that "they knew not what they worſhipped, and that ſalvation was of the Jews."

With ſuch an example before me, I claim the right, to which a Miniſter of the Church is entitled, of maintaining the ground on which ſhe ſtands; and of reaſoning, for the benefit of her members, in conformity with thoſe premiſes, which ſhe has authoritatively laid down; without being conſidered anſwerable, in any way, for conſequences which may attach to a denial of her premiſes, or to a ſeparation from her communion. Theſe conſequences it is my utmoſt wiſh, from a general love towards my Chriſtian brethren, to prevent; though I dare not indulge an hope, that any feeble efforts of mine will turn to much account, after the arguments of ſo many wiſe and learned men have proved ineffectual. Still, when I ſee ſo many apparently idle and unconcerned, whilſt the enemy is digging and undermining the very ground on which they ſtand; and at the ſame time conſider, that they who help not to ſupport the Church when ſhe is in diſtreſs, do in reality contribute to pull her down: in writing, as an honeſt miniſter of that Church

ought to write on her ſubject, I feel that ſatisfaction, which muſt ever accompany a conſcientious diſcharge of duty.

All I requeſt of my reader is, that he would lay aſide every prejudice, and with becoming reverence and humility of ſoul take his inſtruction from GOD: ſince to be wiſe above what is written, whether in matters of doctrine or diſcipline, is to throw up the reins to inordinate affection, and to multiply error without end. Adverting to the effects the latitudinarian principle has already produced in the world, its progreſſive nature, and the extremity to which, if not counteracted, it neceſſarily leads; let him conſider the growing indifference to the Divine inſtitution of the Church, the contempt of its order, and the indiſcriminate aſſumption of its ſacred miniſtry, to be, what it is much to be feared it is, a part of that wild philoſophy, "which inculcates on every individual this dangerous principle; that his own capricious and uninformed notions are to ſuperſede thoſe ancient rules, which are taught by Divine Wiſdom, or eſtabliſhed on the baſis of human experience; and which have hitherto been regarded with reverence, and conſidered as the teſts and the bulwarks of morality: a philoſophy, which, on the ground that every man is to erect a ſtandard of right and wrong for himſelf, maintains the moſt criminal and deſtructive actions to be juſtifiable, provided their perpetrator have ſo depraved a judgment, and ſo vitiated a heart, as *ſin-*

cavely to think them meritorious."* A philoſophy, which, regarding with ſupercilious contempt the eſtabliſhed ſyſtems of policy, morality, and religion, by which the conduct and opinions of mankind have been hitherto regulated, has been long employed in ſapping the foundation on which all ſubmiſſion to government ſtands; with the view of thereby ſo unſettling the human mind on this important ſubject, as to diſpoſe it not to leave one ſtone upon another of thoſe venerable edifices, which it hath been the labour of ſo many ages to raiſe and to complete. And unleſs, by ſuffering his reaſon to become the dupe to ſuch a licentious principle, he has learned to think with the ſenſeleſs philoſophers of the day, that the maintenance of true religion is a matter of no moment to a ſtate; he cannot remain indifferent to the preſent increaſing ſeparation from a Church, which, from its diſtinguiſhed excellence, has been conſidered, by thoſe who had no perſonal attachment to her, as exhibiting the moſt perfect ſpecimen of reformed Chriſtendom.

But when it is conſidered, that the moſt fatal errors derive their origin from the little attention that is paid to the conſtitution of the Church; the indifference with which this ſubject is now regarded, even by thoſe whom we muſt ſuppoſe to be intereſted in it, is not more the cauſe of aſtoniſhment to us, than of concern. For, admitting that a regular

* "View of the Moral State of Society," by J. Bowles, eſq.

form of Church government was once eſtabliſhed by Divine authority, it requires no argument to prove, that all thoſe various forms with which the choice of Chriſtians is now diſtracted, cannot be right. In fact, on the ground of ſuch admiſſion, all muſt be wrong which deviate from the original model; becauſe our SAVIOUR, who, through the medium of his Apoſtles, laid that model down, was alone entitled to conſtruct the platform on which his own kingdom ſhould be built. But what adds ſtill greater weight to this conſideration, by proving that it is a circumſtance by no means of ſmall importance whether Chriſtians adhere to this Divine model or not, is; that, as the great ſcheme of Redemption is the ſole effect of Divine grace, it neceſſarily muſt be embraced as it is propoſed: on the acknowledged principle, that of him who is to receive a favour, it is to be expected that he ſhould accede to the terms on which it is offered. Now we know *from Scripture*, that all the promiſes which relate peculiarly to the Goſpel, are made to the Church of CHRIST; and we have no authority *from Scripture* to ſay, that any but thoſe who are members of that Church are intereſted in them. The "ſecret things belong to the LORD our GOD;" on them, conſequently, we have no judgment to form. But with reſpect to thoſe which have been revealed, we are to judge in conformity with the tenour of ſuch revelation; from which revelation it ſhould ſeem, that the wilful de-

ſertion of that Church to which the promiſes have been made, muſt be conſidered as a virtual rejection of the terms on which the mercy of the Goſpel has been proffered, and a formal renunciation of all *covenanted* claim to its benefits.

With this chain of reaſoning in view, ſhould my arguments fail to bring conviction to my reader's mind, relative to the conſtitution of the Chriſtian church, and his own duties conſequent thereupon; I leave him with my beſt wiſhes and prayers to his own judgment: but not without reminding him, that the ſubject here laid before him is the reſult of the fulleſt, and moſt deliberate inveſtigation, grounded on the conviction, that that cementing bond of the ſpirit, for which our SAVIOUR ſo earneſtly prayed, which unites Chriſtians to their head, and to one another; making them regard themſelves as members of the ſame body, *the Church;* as a fold of ſheep, not as ſtraggling individuals; is not a matter either of indifference or "doubtful opinion," but capable of the moſt demonſtrative proof; and conſequently of moſt *eſſential* importance.

One of the moſt learned and moſt ſpiritual biſhops that our Church can boaſt, in one of his ſermons on the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt, has placed this ſubject of Chriſtian unity in that ſtriking and beautiful light, ſo peculiar to himſelf, which cannot fail to leave an impreſſion on the mind of every ſpiritual reader. Speaking of the Holy Ghoſt, he calls Him

the *very essential unity*; the *love-knot* of the two persons, the Father and the Son; even of GOD with GOD. And he is sent to be the union, the love-knot of the two natures united in Christ; even of GOD with man. And can we imagine, that He, *essential unity*, will enter but where there is unity—the Spirit of Unity, but where there is unity of spirit? Verily there is not, there cannot possibly be, a more proper and peculiar, a more true and certain, disposition to make us meet for Him, than that quality in us that is most like his nature and essence; that is, *Unanimity*. Faith to the word, and love to the spirit, are the true preparations. And there is not a greater bar, a more fatal opposition, to his entry, than discord and disunited minds. They neither give nor receive the Holy Ghost; their heart is divided, their accord is gone: the cord of love is untwisted; they cannot live; the spirit is gone too. And do we marvel, that the spirit doth scarcely pant in us? that we sing and say, 'Come, Holy Ghost;' and yet he cometh no faster! Why; the day of Pentecost is come, and we are not all of one accord.—*Accord* is wanting: the very first point is wanting to make us meet for his coming. Sure his after-coming will be like to his first; to them that are, and not to any but to them that are, *of one accord*.

"And who shall make us of one accord? High shall be his reward in Heaven, and happy his re-

membrance on earth, that ſhall be the means to reſtore this accord to the Church; that once we might keep a true and perfect Pentecoſt: when the diſciples of CHRIST were all *with one accord* in one place."

May the GOD of Peace grant, that every member of the Church, more particularly every Miniſter of it, may feel the full force of the above ſpiritual language of the excellent Biſhop ANDREWS. In ſuch caſe, we might hope, that the Dove,* the ſpouſe of CHRIST, as the Church is called, may ſtill take her reſt in this favoured land; and that the ſpirit of her beloved may dwell among us of a truth.—To this end, do Thou, O Holy and Eternal Spirit, who, in ſeparating us to the miniſtry, didſt take us out of the world, cleanſe our thoughts by thy holy inſpiration, keeping them out of the corruptions, and above the policy or wiſdom of the world, which is "fooliſhneſs with GOD." And do Thou, O bleſſed LORD, who haſt ſet ſuperior watchmen upon the walls of thy Church, and inferior at her gates, cauſe them to watch over her by night and by day; that uniformity of doctrine and wholeſomeneſs of diſcipline may ſo work together for the good and glory of thy Church, that ſhe may not always labour under the

* Song of SOLOMON, c. ii. 14.

"Ergo hanc unam *Columbam, et dilectam ſponſam ſuam* CHRISTUS appellat; hæc apud omnes hæreticos et ſchiſmaticos eſſe non poteſt." Optat. Milevitan.

diſtreſs and diſorders of a ſiege; but may come forth in the face of her enemies, "terrible as an army with banners."* Even ſo, Amen.

It remains only, from a reſpect uſually paid to the candid reader, that I briefly inform him, that the preſent edition differs from the preceding one, chiefly in the adduction of thoſe authorities, which were judged neceſſary to the more firm eſtabliſhment of the ground undertaken to be maintained. And if, inſtead of taking up with the floating, unſettled, and for the moſt part erroneous opinion of the day, on the ſubject of the Church, he will be at the trouble to viſit the fountains, from which I have drawn; he will know, that no *new* things are brought to his ears, but that I have written as I have read. The advantage he will derive from this mode of proceeding will be two-fold. In the firſt place, as a balance againſt his not thinking with the croud, (a mortifying circumſtance, it muſt be allowed, to thoſe who take the world for their ſtandard) he will have the ſatisfaction to think with thoſe, who moſt conſidered, and certainly beſt underſtood, this important ſubject. In the ſecond place, ſhould the argument, in his opinion, have ſuffered from my want of ſkill in conducting it, he will be qualified to improve it to his own mind; and having, as I have no doubt will be the caſe, thereby confirmed himſelf, his time cannot afterwards be better employed, than in ſtrengthening his brethren.

* Song of Solomon, c. vi. v. 4.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

NO wiſe man makes the practice of the world a rule for his government in religious matters; being ſatisfied that no practice, however general, can make that right, which the word of GOD has determined to be wrong. Cuſtom may indeed reconcile us to any thing. But cuſtom is not the law of the wiſe man; becauſe, being at times no leſs an advocate for error than for truth, it can furniſh no reaſonable ſatisfaction to the party governed by it. Men, as men, are liable to error. Nevertheleſs error and truth are two things eſſentially different from each other; and it will always conſtitute the beſt employment of the reaſoning faculty, properly to diſcriminate between them.

To enable the thinking man ſo to do, that he may thereby become proof againſt the various deluſions

upon the ſubject of Religion, which have at different periods prevailed in the world; his appeal muſt be made to the ſtandard of judgment ſet up in the word of GOD.

Time was, when *Schiſm*, or the ſin of dividing the Church by a ſeparation from it, was conſidered to be a ſin of the moſt heinous nature; "ſo great, that ſome of the ancients have thought it is not to be expiated by the blood of martyrdom."* It cannot be, becauſe opinions on this ſubject have changed with the times, that the nature of this ſin is alſo changed. For ſo long as the Church continues to be, what it originally was, *a ſociety of* CHRIST'S *forming*, a wilful ſeparation from it muſt be at all times equally ſinful; it being not leſs an oppoſition to a Divine inſtitution in one age of the Church than in another. Conſequently what was ſaid upon this ſubject in the firſt days of Chriſtianity, muſt apply to it with the ſame force and propriety in the times in which we live.

Upon the authority of an inſpired Apoſtle we are informed, that thoſe who "cauſe diviſions in the Church" are to be avoided, as perſons "who ſerve

* Perſuaſive to Communion with the Church of England, by Biſhop GROVE. See London Caſes.

not the LORD JESUS." "Now I beſeech you, brethren, mark them which cauſe diviſions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: for they that are ſuch, ſerve not our LORD JESUS." Rom. xvi. 17. If they ſerve not the LORD JESUS, it requires no great ſagacity to determine whom they ſerve, for there are but two maſters in this caſe that can be ſerved; either that Divine Maſter, who, in love to man, ſet up his kingdom in oppoſition to the prince of this world, that he might thereby counteract his evil work; or that Evil-Worker himſelf, whoſe conſtant employment it is, ſo far as in him lies, to divide and deſtroy that kingdom.

Now no greater advantage can be given to the common enemy in any cauſe, than by a diviſion among the parties profeſſedly engaged in its ſupport. A conſideration, which accounts for that ſtreſs, ſo repeatedly laid in the Apoſtolic writings, upon the preſervation of union and harmony among Chriſtians; as eſſential to the well-being of the Church, conſidered as a ſociety formed by GOD, for the purpoſe of carrying into effect a regular deſign for the benefit of its members.

It having pleaſed Divine Providence to place me in a ſituation, which has given me an opportunity

of ſeeing ſome of thoſe many evils conſequent upon a deviation from GOD's plan in the eſtabliſhment of his Church upon earth; I ſhould do leſs than my duty, did I not take occaſion to ſpeak plainly on this ſubject; truſting that what, from a motive of pure charity to all, may be ſaid upon it, will be received charitably by all; without, if it be poſſible, any mixture of that prejudice, which is able in a manner to convert truth into error, when the mind of the party, to whom it is addreſſed, feels indiſpoſed to receive it.

The object in view on this occaſion is two-fold; to qualify, in the firſt place, the members of the Church to give a reaſon for their communion with it; and thereby prevent their being carried about from one place of public worſhip to another; upon the miſtaken idea, that it is a matter of indifference *where* the word of GOD is preached, or *by whom*: and in the ſecond place, to open the eyes of thoſe, who, with perhaps the beſt intention, may, through ignorance, have ſeparated from the Church; and who, were they better informed, might not ſcruple to prefer its ſober and edifying worſhip to that in which they are at preſent engaged.

He muſt be little acquainted with the world who does not know, that religious prejudices leave the

moſt powerful impreſſion upon the human mind; and that till theſe are removed, it is impoſſible to form a fair judgment upon a ſubject of this nature. Thoſe who have taken their religion upon truſt, or have received it as a ſort of hereditary poſſeſſion from their forefathers, ſeldom give themſelves the trouble to form any judgment upon it. Whilſt others, who, in the choice of their religion, conſult the gratification of paſſion, intereſt, or the promotion of ſome particular object; are, for the moſt part not in a condition to bring this matter to a fair diſcuſſion: The only hope of ſucceſs therefore in this caſe muſt be, from an appeal to the honeſt and well-diſpoſed; thoſe who ſeek the truth in ſincerity, and are reſolved to follow wherever it may lead.

Such are doubtleſs to be found in all congregations of Chriſtian people; ſome of whom, in conſequence only of their never having had the truth properly laid before them; have taken up with erroneous opinions; which, from prejudice of education or incapacity, they are prevented from bringing to the teſt of reaſon and Scripture. Deriving their natural growth in error from their parent ſtock, they have by years acquired an habitual attachment to it; at the ſame time that the earneſt zeal even of thoſe who

might be qualified for the purpoſe, will not let them ſtop to examine the ſource from which it has been derived. Such men may be conſidered as not far from the kingdom of GOD; and it muſt be the earneſt wiſh of every miniſter of that kingdom to bring them into it. Could theſe men be but once brought acquainted with the nature of CHRIST'S church, they would never ſeparate from its communion; becauſe they would be convinced that the plan upon which CHRIST has eſtabliſhed that church, muſt be conformed to by all, who expect to enjoy the privileges annexed to it.

On looking into the writings of the Apoſtles, we find frequent mention made of the unity of the Chriſtian church, as neceſſary to the preſervation of that peace which CHRIST left with his followers; and repeated and earneſt cautions againſt theſe diviſions, by which it muſt be unavoidably diſturbed. The Founder of this church is emphatically ſtiled the *Prince of Peace;* becauſe he is not only the maker of peace between GOD and man, but alſo the author of a religion calculated to promote that bleſſing upon earth. The mark or diſtinction, therefore, by which the profeſſors of this religion ought to be known, is, that love and harmony by which they are joined

together in the ſame mind and in the ſame doctrine: agreeably to the deſcription given of them in the earlieſt ſtage of their connection; before the prince of this world, that deſtroyer of peace, had ſown his ſeeds of diviſion among them; when, as we read, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one ſoul." Acts iv. 32.

As the time of our SAVIOUR's departure from the world drew near, the future eſtabliſhment of his church appears to have conſtituted the moſt intereſting ſubject of his thoughts. That moſt earneſt and ſolemn prayer addreſſed to his FATHER almoſt immediately before his ſuffering, ſtrongly marks out to us his dying wiſh upon it; where, after having firſt prayed for thoſe particular diſciples, to whoſe immediate care and direction he thought fit to commit his church; that they might be duly ſanctified for the great work of their miniſtry, he thus proceeds:— "Neither pray I for theſe alone, but for them alſo which ſhall believe on me through their word; that *they all may be one*, as thou, FATHER, art in me, and I in Thee, that they alſo may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou haſt ſent me." JOHN xvii. 20, 21.

Unity, therefore, was designed to be an essential characteristic of the church of CHRIST; the members of which were to be considered as constituting one body, animated by one spirit, imparted to them by their regular communication with one head, JESUS CHRIST. Agreeably to which idea, the Apostle addresses himself to his Ephesian converts: "I beseech you (says he) that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." As a reason for their so doing, the Apostle proceeds to remind them, that "there is *one* body; and *one* spirit; *one* hope of their calling; *one* LORD, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* GOD and FATHER of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." Ephesians iv. 1, &c.

We have here a picture of the Christian church in its perfect state; in which, in conformity to CHRIST's institution, it ought at all times to be found: a society joined together by the bond of charity, in the profession of the same faith; into which the members of it are admitted by one and the same baptism; in consequence of which they become partakers of that spirit, which is derived to

them from their union with one head, JESUS CHRIST; and are ſupported by the lively hope, that where that Head of the body is, there, in the fulneſs of time, ſhall the members of it be alſo.

If the church, as it is now circumſtanced in the world, bear little reſemblance to this primitive pattern, it muſt be in conſequence of men either having formed miſtaken notions with reſpect to the nature of it, or deviated from the plan upon which it was originally eſtabliſhed. In either caſe, they are deceiving themſelves. For as the church is but one, and the promiſes of God are maade only to that church; man's *covenanted* title to thoſe promiſes muſt depend upon his being a member of it; upon the ſame principle that thoſe perſons only who have been admitted members of a ſociety, have any claim to the privileges of it.

Hence it becomes a matter of importance with every man, to be ſatisfied whether he really is a member of the church of Chriſt; for ſhould he not be ſuch, the ſincerity of his profeſſion will not ſupply the deficiency of thoſe privileges and bleſſings, of which in that caſe he may not be in a ſituation to partake.

The Lord, we read, Acts ii. 47. at the firſt opening of the Apoſtolic commiſſion, "added daily to the church ſuch as ſhould be ſaved." From whence we underſtand, that admiſſion into the church is no indifferent thing, but a privilege of an important kind. Let men reaſon, therefore, as they pleaſe upon this ſubject, the counſel of GOD ſtill ſtandeth ſure. "Many," ſays SOLOMON, "are the devices of a man's heart; nevertheleſs the counſel of the LORD, that ſhall ſtand." Prov. xix. 21. According to the general tenour of Scripture, from which alone any ſafe concluſion can be drawn in this matter, it appears, that the only appointed road to heaven lies through the church of CHRIST upon earth. For the church is the ſpouſe of CHRIST, whoſe office it is to bring forth children unto GOD. And it is from the arms of this ſpiritual mother, that all the legitimate children of the Father are received. In conformity with which idea was the language of St. AUGUSTINE; where, he ſays, "He cannot have GOD for his Father, who hath not the Church for his Mother."

Was this well conſidered, it might be ſuppoſed, that where an event of ſuch importance is at ſtake, no wiſe man would venture to make experiments.

To enable the reader to form ſome correct judgment upon this matter, it is my deſign to lay before him ſome plain thoughts on the following important heads:—1ſt, On the nature, deſign, and conſtitution of the Chriſtian church. 2dly, On the ſin of ſchiſm, or a wilful ſeparation from it. 3dly, On the reaſons commonly advanced to juſtify that ſeparation. And 4thly, On the advantages attendant upon a conſcientious communion with the church; together with the diſadvantages conſequent upon a ſeparation from it. In diſcourſing upon theſe ſubjects, the object is, to enter into them, ſo far only as may be deemed ſufficient for the information of the parties to whom they are immediately addreſſed.

"The lips of the prieſt (we are told) ſhould retain knowledge, and they ſhould ſeek the law at his mouth; for he is the meſſenger of the LORD of Hoſts." —Mal. ii. 7. Every Chriſtian therefore, before he ſeparates from the church, inſtead of being governed by his own imagination, or that of ſome fellow-Chriſtian, not better informed perhaps than himſelf upon the ſubject, ſhould give himſelf an opportunity of knowing from the perſon, whoſe office it is to inform him, whether the reaſons advanced for his quitting the communion of the church are ſtronger

than thoſe which are to be produced for his continuing in it. Whoever determines upon a ſeparation from the church, without having made this previous enquiry, cannot be ſaid to do juſtice, either to himſelf or to his miniſter, and muſt be anſwerable for the conſequence of his neglect.

DISCOURSE II.

On the Nature, Design, and Constitution of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH, *considered as a visible Society.*

BEFORE we can be qualified to determine what is wrong, we muſt have acquired ſome juſt and eſtabliſhed notion with reſpect to what is right. An acquaintance therefore with the nature, deſign, and conſtitution of the *Chriſtian* church, becomes a neceſſary preparative to our forming a proper judgment upon the ſubſequent parts of our ſubject.

To trace the church through its ſeveral progreſſive ſtages; from its original eſtabliſhment in paradiſe, where the good news of a Saviour was firſt delivered to fallen man; through its infant condition; and days of contraction in the ark, when it was confined to one ſingle family; to its ſubſequent enlargement in the deſcendants of ABRAHAM; its wandering ſtate in the wilderneſs; and its more complete ſettlement in the land of Canaan; down to that fulneſs of time, when our SAVIOUR came in the fleſh to viſit it; would

lead into too wide a field. It is our happineſs, and to that part of the ſubject our preſent attention is confined, that we live in that ſtage of the church, which may be conſidered as the completion of every former diſpenſation. JESUS CHRIST, the head of the church, by purging it from the corruptions which it had contracted, and reſtoring its worſhip to that ſpiritual ſtandard in which its perfection conſiſts; has, as it were, put his finiſhing hand to the eſtabliſhment of it, upon the plan beſt calculated to ſecure the purpoſe he had in view.

It is a matter therefore of importance, that we ſhould be particular in our obſervations upon this point; becauſe a deviation from CHRIST's plan, by an attempt to alter the conſtiution of his church, may make it a very different thing from what it was deſigned to be; and though, in this caſe, a man may ſatisfy himſelf, by calling the creature of his own imagination the church of CHRIST, it certainly does not follow that it really is ſuch; and it may be the moſt dangerous piece of ſelf-impoſition thus to conſider it.

To underſtand the nature and deſign of the Chriſtian church, we muſt conſider the world at large as lying in wickedneſs; and conſequently in a ſtate of condemnation before GOD. Out of this wicked

ſociety, of which all are by nature born members, GOD has been pleaſed to call men into another ſociety, very different from it; the object of which is to miniſter to their ſalvation, by ſo purifying them from the corruptions of a fallen world, that they may not be condemned with it. This ſociety, ſometimes called the *Church of Chriſt*, becauſe CHRIST purchaſed it with his blood; ſometimes his *kingdom*, becauſe he is the king and governor of it; was ſet up in oppoſition to that kingdom of this world, which has Satan for its prince. Into this ſociety, or kingdom, perſons are admitted by baptiſm; which is the ſeal conveying to them an aſſurance of their future inheritance: by the *regular* application of which, they are ſanctified or ſet apart from the reſt of the world, as the peculiar property of the Holy Spirit. Having then, in conſequence of their being born anew of the Holy Spirit in baptiſm, profeſſedly withdrawn themſelves from the ſervice of the prince of this world, and entered into that of the living GOD; they become entitled to thoſe privileges, which the King, into whoſe ſervice they are entered, has purchaſed for his ſubjects.

Whilſt therefore thoſe who, in their natural condition, "are ſtrangers from the covenant of promiſe; living without hope and without GOD in the world;"

thoſe who have been tranſlated from the world into the church, may thereby be conſidered as delivered from the powers of darkneſs, and become heirs with CHRIST of an eternal kingdom.

The privileges to which the members of the church are entitled, namely, pardon of ſin, and eternal life, having been purchaſed by JESUS CHRIST; the church muſt of neceſſity be a ſociety of *his forming*. For no man can take upon himſelf to form a church; in other words, to call men out of the world; and by incorporating them into a certain ſociety, thereby to inveſt them with Goſpel privileges; for this plain reaſon, becauſe no man can enſure to the members of a ſociety of his own framing thoſe privileges which he has it not in his power to confer. Every thing, therefore, in this matter, muſt be done in the name, and by commiſſion from CHRIST; becauſe CHRIST is the fulfiller of that divine engagement, by which alone man is delivered from condemnation with the world, and placed in a ſtate of acceptance with GOD.

Now nothing can be more obvious to common ſenſe, than that no man can engage for what he is not in a condition to perform, unleſs particular circumſtances authoriſe him ſo to do. On the other hand, an engagement entered into on the behalf of

another can be binding only upon the party, by virtue of a *commiſſion* received for that purpoſe. The application of theſe two ſelf-evident poſitions ſufficiently point out the difference between thoſe who have received a commiſſion from the Head of the church, to adminiſter the affairs of his ſpiritual kingdom, and thoſe who have not.

If it be admitted, then, that the church is a ſociety; as ſuch, it muſt be poſſeſſed of power neceſſary to its own preſervation. It muſt have its rules and orders; and conſequently its governors, to carry thoſe rules and orders into effect. Without ſuch a proviſion for order and government, no ſociety can ſubſiſt.

That ſuch a power was left with the church by its Divine Founder, is to be proved from the commiſſion, by which the governors of it received authority to admit members into the church, and to exclude them from it, according to the qualification or diſqualification of the reſpective parties. And that this power comprehended under it every exertion of authority neceſſary to the regulation of the ſociety committed to their management, we conclude (to avoid multiplying proof upon a ſubject that ſpeaks for itſelf) from St. PAUL's charge to his diſciples, that they ſhould "obey them that had the rule over them, and

ſubmit themſelves;" from the conſideration, that their ſpiritual governors "watched for their ſouls." Heb. xiii. 17.

Moreover, as there are differences of adminiſtrations, and diverſities of operations to be performed in the church, there muſt be perſons regularly appointed to the diſcharge of the ſeveral offices, neceſſary to the well-being of the ſociety to which they belong. But a regular appointment of offices pre-ſuppoſes a power lodged ſome where, to determine upon the qualification of the undertaking parties; for if individuals are left to ſettle this matter for themſelves, the ſociety will not only be worſe ſerved for the time being; (the moſt ſelf-ſufficient men being, generally ſpeaking, the leaſt qualified to diſcharge the office they undertake;) but what is a ſtill further conſideration, the diſorder conſequent upon an indiſcriminate exerciſe of public functions, muſt ultimately terminate in the diſſolution of that ſociety, where ſuch confuſion prevails.

But the church being a ſociety, of which CHRIST is the head, from whom alone all the benefits belonging to it are derived; the appointment of the governors, together with the rules and orders by which this ſociety is to be managed and directed, muſt ori-

ginate with, and receive its ſanction from him. For man, merely as man, can claim no rule over his fellow-creatures. Government, therefore, whether in church or ſtate, muſt look to that ſupreme Diſpoſer, from whom all power is derived; by whoſe authority alone the validity of its exertions can be eſtabliſhed. The reaſon of the thing, in this caſe, we ſhall find upon enquiry to be confirmed by the hiſtory of facts.

When our SAVIOUR, after his reſurrection, proceeded to the regular eſtabliſhment of his church upon earth, he appointed the eleven principal diſciples, or Apoſtles as they are called by way of diſtinction, to meet him in a mountain in Galilee, for the purpoſe of delivering his commiſſion and directions to them on that ſubject. "Then the eleven diſciples (we read) went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where JESUS had appointed them. And JESUS came, and ſpake unto them, ſaying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach (or make diſciples in) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matth. xxviii. 18.

It is to be obſerved, that our SAVIOUR's diſciples at this time exceeded the number of five hundred. After his reſurrection, St. PAUL tells us, that "he was ſeen of above five hundred brethren at once." But our SAVIOUR did not deliver the commiſſion for adminiſtering the ſacraments of his church to his diſciples at large, but only to his Apoſtles; and to them not by accident, but, it ſhould ſeem, by *expreſs deſign:* in the firſt inſtance, at his laſt ſupper; and in the ſecond, when, in conſequence of a particular appointment to meet him in Galilee after his aſcenſion, he delivered to them his final commiſſion to "baptize all nations."

Now the granting a commiſſion manifeſtly implies, that none but thoſe to whom it has been delivered, have authority to act in that buſineſs for which the commiſſion has been granted. Were it otherwiſe, the commiſſion would be an uſeleſs form. CHRIST, therefore, by making choice only of *eleven* out of the whole *number* of his diſciples, intended, it is preſumed, that the buſineſs which he authorized them to do, ſhould not be performed by every one that might think proper to take upon him to execute it.*

* Should there remain a doubt on this head, the particular ſelection of the eleven Apoſtles from the other diſciples, for the

It is to be remarked further, that the tenour of the commiſſion delivered to the Apoſtles ſeems purpoſely calculated to provide againſt, and thereby to render unneceſſary, all *ſelf-conſtituted* authority in the church. "As my Father has ſent me," ſaid CHRIST, "ſo ſend I you;" &c. According to the common import of which words, as well as the received ſenſe of them in the Catholic church, our SAVIOUR is to be underſtood as if he had ſaid, "With the ſame power and authority that my Father ſent me into the world to conſtitute and govern my church, I ſend you and your ſucceſſors for the further advancement of the ſame divine purpoſe; and lo! my ſpirit ſhall accompany the regular adminiſtration of the office to the end of the world. As therefore, in conſequence of the miſſion which I have received from my Father, I ſend you; ſo, by virtue of the miſſion received from me, you have authority to ſend others, for the purpoſe of carrying on and perpetuating the plan which I have ſet on foot in

purpoſe of delivering to them their commiſſion, is calculated to remove it. See Luke vi. 12, 13; Mark iii. 13, 14; Matt. x. 1; xxviii. 16, 19, 20; John xx. 21, 22. This important point the reader will find particularly made out, and inſiſted upon, in "PORTER'S Diſcourſe of Church Government," chap. ii. p. 45, et ſeq. and chap. iii. p. 61, et ſeq.

the world, by a regular adminiſtration of the affairs of my kingdom to the end of time." The government committed to the Apoſtles was, therefore, of the ſame nature with that of CHRIST; for thus he declares to them: "I appoint to you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed to me." Luke xxii. 29. The keys of the kingdom of heaven CHRIST received from GOD; by virtue of which grant, he had power to remit ſins on earth. Matt. ix. 16. Theſe ſame keys, with the power which belonged to them, were delivered by CHRIST to his Apoſtles in theſe words: "Whoſeſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted; and whoſeſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained." John xx. 23. "The Father (we read, John v. 22, 27) committed all judgment to his Son." And our LORD promiſed, that when the Son of Man ſhall ſit on the throne of his glory, the twelve Apoſtles ſhould ſit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael." Matt. xix. 28. Hence it is, that the Apoſtles are repreſented as conſtituting part of the foundation on which the Chriſtian church was built. "The wall of the holy Jeruſalem, deſcending out of heaven from GOD," the Spirit deſcribes as having *twelve* foundations, and in them "the names of the *twelve Apoſtles* of the Lamb."

Rev. xxi. 14. And St. PAUL told the Epheſians, that they were "the houſehold of GOD, built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone." Eph. ii. 19, 20.

But it may be ſaid, although this commiſſion, delivered to the Apoſtles, ſtamps a diſtinction upon their characters, and evidently inveſts them with a particular office and authority; yet it does not furniſh ſufficient light by which to determine the preciſe conſtitution of the Chriſtian church. It certainly does not; and were there no other light vouchſafed to us on this ſubject, we ſhould not ſpeak ſo decidedly upon it as we now feel ourſelves authoriſed to do.

But, perhaps, more information may be expected in this caſe than the Bible was deſigned to furniſh. Divine revelation, it is to be obſerved, was not meant to gratify the curioſity, but to furniſh information ſufficient to eſtabliſh the faith, and govern the practice, of the Chriſtian profeſſor. It is not to be ſuppoſed, that in the ſhort hiſtory given by the Apoſtles, one thouſandth part of the doctrine, or inſtruction, delivered by our SAVIOUR to his diſciples, could be recorded. St. JOHN makes uſe of a ſtrong expreſſion, where he ſays, that "if all things which

JESUS did ſhould be written, every one, the world itſelf could not contain the books that ſhould be written;" thereby giving us to underſtand, that the hiſtories written by the Apoſtles furniſh but a very ſhort abſtract of our SAVIOUR's life and converſation, by no means ſufficient to qualify the reader to form a minute and circumſtantial jndgment, with reſpect to any particular tranſaction recorded.

Upon the ſubject before us, for inſtance, we have no information but what is derived from the mere recital of the fact; that our SAVIOUR did, after his reſurrection, deliver a commiſſion to his eleven diſciples, relative to the government of his church. The manner in which this commiſſion was to be carried into effect, is to be aſcertained by the ſubſequent practice of the Apoſtles; which doubtleſs conformed to the direction they had received from their Divine Maſter. For it is not to be ſuppoſed, that our SAVIOUR would fail to accompany the delivery of ſo important a commiſſion with all the information neceſſary for the parties entruſted with it. Indeed it ſhould ſeem, as if this were one of the principal objects our SAVIOUR had in view, in remaining ſo long upon earth after his reſurrection; ſince we are expreſsly told, that he employed that

time in ſpeaking of the things "*pertaining to the kingdom of* GOD." Acts i. 3. If the Apoſtles have not recorded the directions which accompanied the delivery of their commiſſion, we are not from thence warranted to conclude, that no directions were given; but that they were judged unneceſſary to be particularized; for this reaſon, it may be, becauſe the government of the Chriſtian church was to correſpond with that of the Jewiſh. For the Jewiſh and Chriſtian church are to be conſidered, not ſo much different eſtabliſhments, as two editions (if we may ſo ſay) of the ſame church of GOD; the former conſtituting, as it were, the ground-plan upon which the latter has been built.

Indeed, as the œconomy of man's ſalvation forms one complete whole, it is but to be expected, that there ſhould be an uniformity in its ſeveral parts; although the modern Chriſtian, by confining his attention to one particular part of the Divine diſpenſation, is thereby unqualified to trace the reſemblance between them.

If GOD, then, thought proper Himſelf to regulate the ſervice of the Jewiſh church, by the expreſs appointment of thoſe who were to bear office in it, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that He would adopt a

ſimilar plan in the Chriſtian church. Nor is it to be imagined, that He who did all things with regularity and order; who in his own perſon paid a delicate regard to the ordinances of the old diſpenſation, which were to be done away; ſhould leave the affairs of his new church only in an irregular and diſorderly condition.

The hiſtory of the Chriſtian church proves that He has not done ſo; it being taken for granted, that the practice of the Apoſtles, in the execution of their commiſſion, will be admitted as authority ſufficient to eſtabliſh this fact. The Apoſtles, we are told, did not enter upon the diſcharge of their commiſſion, till they had received the promiſe of the Father, in the gift of the Holy Ghoſt. "They were commanded to tarry in Jeruſalem till they were endued with power from on high." Luke xxiv. 49. Which power the Apoſtles actually received at the ſubſequent day of Pentecoſt; when, according to our SAVIOUR'S promiſe, the Holy Ghoſt viſibly deſcended upon them, as their previous qualification for the diſcharge of their high office. What form of government, therefore, the Apoſtles agreed to eſtabliſh in the church, if not expreſsly communicated to them by CHRIST in perſon, muſt be

conſidered as eſtabliſhed under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, Apoſtolical practice, with reſpect to the government of the church, well aſcertained, muſt in this matter be equivalent to Apoſtolical precept with reſpect to the doctrine of it; becauſe the Holy Spirit, by whom the Apoſtles were directed, and whoſe office it was to teach them all things neceſſary to the well-being of the Chriſtian church, would not lead them into error in one caſe more than in the other.

What that form of government was, we ſhall be at no loſs to determine, if we are diſpoſed to enquire fairly into the ſubject. Indeed, the conſtitution of the Chriſtian church, as eſtabliſhed by the Apoſtles, may be conſidered to be ſufficiently notorious from their writings, to render particular proof on the ſubject unneceſſary.

But did the concluſion upon this matter ſtand upon leſs firm ground than it really does, or were the language of Scripture in this caſe leſs clear than it is, the *practice of the primitive church* furniſhes ſuch a comment upon it, as muſt, we ſhould think, determine the judgment of every unprejudiced man.

It is a known axiom, that every law is beſt explained by the ſubſequent practice. Let this maxim be applied in the preſent caſe.

"Be ye followers of me, (ſays ST. PAUL in his directions to the church at Corinth) even as I alſo am of CHRIST. Now I pray you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them to you." 1 Cor. xi. 1, 2. To every careful reader of the New Teſtament, it will evidently appear, that the Apoſtles were the followers of CHRIST in the adminiſtration of his kingdom on earth; no act of power being done by our LORD in the fleſh, which was not, at leaſt in ſome degree, exerciſed by the Apoſtles after his aſcenſion. Their preſcribing rules and ordinances for the church, and enforcing them by ſuitable puniſhments; their judging and condemning tranſgreſſors, and their pardoning and abſolving penitents; their ordaining miniſters, and ſuperintending the diſcharge of their miniſterial duty; together with the obedience and attendance paid to the Apoſtles by the inferior miniſters; are circumſtances, which prove, that the government of the infant church was in their hands: and that it was managed by them on the plan now diſtinguiſhed by the word *Epiſcopal*. From Apoſtolical authority deſcending to Catholic practice, which (as Biſhop TAYLOR* has obſerved) "is the

* "Of the Sacred Order of Epiſcopacy." Sect. 22.

next basis of the power, and order of Episcopacy," we are as well assured as we can be of any historical fact whatever, that TIMOTHY, TITUS, IGNATIUS, POLYCARP, CLEMENS ROMANUS, and others, the immediate disciples of the Apostles, did exercise the Episcopal office, for substance the same as it is now exercised, in that branch of the Christian church established in this country. From which circumstance we feel ourselves warranted in concluding, that such was the government originally settled in the church; because it is not to be supposed, that those who lived with the Apostles, who exercised the office they had received in the church by virtue of their appointment, and in some measure under their superintendance, could deviate from the plan laid down by the Apostles, whom they considered as acting under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit. For if it can be supposed, that the immediate disciples of the Apostles did not know the minds of their teachers, or that their practice was not strictly conformable to it; or "if it is imaginable that the whole world should, immediately after the death of the Apostles, conspire together, to seek themselves, and not the things that are of JESUS CHRIST, to erect a government of their own desiring,

not ordained by CHRIST, not delivered by his Apoſtles; and to relinquiſh a divine foundation, and the Apoſtolical ſuperſtructure, which, if it was at all, was a part of our Maſter's will;"* we may ſuppoſe and imagine any thing; and there is no ground left, upon which any concluſive reaſoning on this ſubject can be built.

But "what need we," ſaid a judicious writer, who had paid particular attention to this ſubject, and whoſe writings have been frequently referred to as a ſtandard of judgment in church matters; "what need we," ſaid he, "to ſeek for proofs, that the Apoſtles, who began their order of regiment by biſhops, did it not but by Divine inſtinct; when, without ſuch direction, things of far leſs weight and moment they attempted not? PAUL and BARNABAS did not open their mouths unto the Gentiles, till the Spirit had ſaid, 'Separate me PAUL and BARNABAS for the work whereunto I have ſent them.' The eunuch, by PHILIP, was neither baptized nor inſtructed, before the angel of GOD was ſent to give him notice, that ſo it pleaſed the MOST HIGH. In Aſia, PAUL and the reſt were ſilent, becauſe the Spirit

* TAYLOR, "Of the ſacred Order and Office of Epiſcopacy." Section 22.

forbad them to ſpeak. When they intended to have ſeen Bythinia, they ſtayed their journey, the Spirit not giving them leave to go. Before TIMOTHY was employed in thoſe Epiſcopal affairs of the church, about which the Apoſtle PAUL uſed him, the HOLY GHOST gave ſpecial charge for his ordination; and prophetical intelligence, more than once, what ſucceſs the ſame would have. And ſhall we think, that JAMES was made biſhop of Jeruſalem, EVODIUS biſhop of the church of Antioch, the angels in the churches of Aſia biſhops; that biſhops every where were appointed to take away factious contentions and ſchiſms; without ſome like divine inſtigation and direction of the HOLY GHOST? Wherefore let us not fear to be herein bold and peremptory; that if any thing in the church's regiment, ſurely the firſt inſtitution of biſhops was from heaven, was even of GOD; the HOLY GHOST was the author of it." HOOKER's Ecc. Pol. book vii. If we ſay then, that in every church that was planted, the offices of biſhop, prieſt, and deacon, anſwering to thoſe of high-prieſt, prieſt, and Levite, under the law, were to be found, we ſhall ſay no more than the hiſtory of the primitive church will warrant. It being certain that the œconomy of the

IV

Chriſtian church correſponded as nearly to that of her elder ſiſter the Jewiſh church, as the different nature of their reſpective ſervices would permit. Indeed, from the parallel ſubſiſting between the law and the Goſpel, the one being conſidered as the type or figure of the other, it was no uncommon thing for the primitive fathers, in ſpeaking of the government of the Chriſtian church, to argue from the diſtinctive offices in the Levitical prieſthood, to a ſimilar diſtinction in the Chriſtian. "CHRIST and his Apoſtles, (ſays the learned HICKES) who were the reformers of the Jewiſh œconomy into the Chriſtian church, did build with many of the old materials, and conformed their new houſe, as much as they could, after the platform of the old. This will appear from baptiſm itſelf, which was a ceremony by which proſelytes, both men, women, and children, were initiated into the Jewiſh church; which ceremony our SAVIOUR conſecrated in the place of that of circumciſion, to be the ſacrament of initiation into his church, and a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith."* So likewiſe the other ſacrament of the LORD's Supper was certainly of Jewiſh original, as

* SELDEN de jure, l. ii. c. 2.; de Synedr. l. i. c. 3.—LIGHTFOOT Horæ Hebraicæ, p. 42.—HAMMOND on MATTH. iii. 1.—JACOB ALTINGIUS de Proſelytis.

hath been shewed by many learned men;† and the correspondence of the bishops, presbyters, and deacons, to the high-priest, priests, and Levites, doth shew, that the subordination of the Christian hierarchy is taken from the Jewish church; as ST. JEROME observes in his epistle to EVAGRIUS, "what the high-priest, priests, and Levites were in the temple, that the bishops, presbyters, and deacons are in the church, according to the apostolical constitution taken from the Old Testament." "Et ut sciamus traditiones Apostolicas sumptas de veteri Testamento, quod AARON, et filii ejus, et Levitæ in templo fuerunt, hoc sibi episcopi et presbyteri et diaconi vendicent in ecclesia."‡

Thus, in correspondence with the same established idea, St. CLEMENT, one of the first bishops, a fellow

† MEDE, 1 book, disc. 51, 6, 11.—GROT. Opusc. tom. iii. p. 516. CUDWORTH on the LORD'S Supper.—THORNDIKE, c. 10.—Dr. TAYLOR'S "Great Exemplar;" p. 1; Discourse of Baptism.

‡ The reader will find a masterly illustration of the connection between the Jewish œconomy and Christian church, (a subject necessary to be understood by all Christian divines, who, according to our SAVIOUR'S description of the doctor "rightly instructed unto the kingdom of GOD;" should be like unto an householder, "who bringeth out of his storehouse new things and old:") in the discourse previous to the "Case of Baptism, by the very learned Dean of WORCESTER." See London Cases, No. 15.

labourer with St. PAUL, writes to the members of the church at Corinth, for the expreſs purpoſe of preſſing upon them the duty of eccleſiaſtical ſubordination and obedience. "To the high-prieſt," ſays he, "were allotted his proper offices; to the prieſts their proper place was aſſigned; and to the Levites their ſervices were appointed; and the laymen were reſtrained within the precepts of laymen."

Now were there no ſimiliarity at that time acknowledged between the Jewiſh œconomy and Chriſtian church; were there no offices in the latter correſponding with thoſe of high-prieſt, prieſt, and Levite, in the former; the force of argument, otherwiſe to be deduced from the application in this caſe, muſt have been totally loſt upon the parties to whom it was addreſſed.

But upon appeal to St. PAUL's writings we find, that part of the charge delivered to TIMOTHY, appointed biſhop of the church in Epheſus, was, that "he ſhould lay hands ſuddenly on no man;" that he ſhould receive no accuſation againſt a preſbyter, but before two or three witneſſes; and that the deacons in his church ſhould be men of ſober and orderly converſation. Here, then, we have the form of the Chriſtian church, after the model drawn out

by the Apoſtles themſelves, with its officers diſtinguiſhed by their reſpective ſtations; the biſhop, as ſupreme governor, anſwering to the high-prieſt under the law; the preſbyters and deacons to the prieſts and Levites, as ſubordinate miniſters in it. And by an appeal to eccleſiaſtical hiſtory it will be found, that immediately from the death of the Apoſtles, or a very few years after, the government of the Chriſtian church throughout the world was in every part of it ſettled upon this ſame Apoſtolic plan.

Under this form of government has the church continued, from the days of the Apoſtles down to the preſent time; and, doubtleſs, will continue ſo to the end; whatever occaſional interruptions it has met with, or may ſtill meet with from the prevailing paſſions and prejudices of ſinful men. "For it is impoſſible," we are told, "but that offences will come;" and "there muſt be hereſies; that they which are approved may be made manifeſt." LUKE xvii. 1; 1 Cor. xi. 19.

Should further teſtimony in favour of the government of the church, as here deſcribed, be neceſſary, we are furniſhed with what muſt be deemed direct to the purpoſe, in the writings of ST. CLEMENT above-mentioned; where he ſays, in his firſt epiſtle

to the Corinthians, that "the Apoſtles knowing of the LORD JESUS, that conteſts would ariſe concerning the Epiſcopal name, (or order) and for this cauſe having perfect fore-knowledge (of theſe things,) they did ordain thoſe whom we have mentioned before; and moreover did eſtabliſh the conſtitution, that other approved men ſhould ſucceed them who died in their office and miniſtry."

Thus then, upon the authority of ST. PAUL, who was called to be an Apoſtle by JESUS CHRIST, together with that of ST. CLEMENT, who was a biſhop within forty years after our LORD's reſurrection, and who, as living with the Apoſtles, muſt have been made acquainted with the conſtitution of the church over which he was appointed to preſide; ſupported by the conſideration of that uniform ſyſtem of government which has prevailed in the church from the beginning, we are warranted in determining; that where we find the order of biſhops, prieſts, and deacons regularly appointed, there we find the church of CHRIST according to its original conſtitution; and without theſe (to make uſe of the words of ST. IGNATIUS, who it is to be obſerved was the diſciple of ST. JOHN) it is not called a church. "Let all," ſays this holy man, "reverence the deacons,

as the miniſters of JESUS CHRIST; and in like manner the biſhop, as JESUS CHRIST, the Son of the Father; the preſbyters, as the ſenate of GOD, and college of Apoſtles; without theſe, it is not called a church."

From whence the obvious concluſion is, that the Church is not merely a number of people, agreeing in the ſame articles of faith, or in the ſame acts of religious worſhip; but it is moreover a ſociety, holding one viſible communion under the ſame divinely-inſtituted government: a ſociety, not of *man*'s but of *Chriſt*'s forming; a ſociety or ſpiritual incorporation, of which He is the head, and all individual Chriſtians, who have been regularly admitted into it, the members. For the church is not a creature of the fancy, deriving an imaginary exiſtence from the whim and caprice of man, but a ſettled and permanent eſtabliſhment, the work of Divine Wiſdom. It is, moreover, not hid in a corner, that men need be at a loſs to find it; but a viſible ſociety, poſſeſſed of thoſe characteriſtic marks, by which it may at all times be known. Like all other ſocieties compoſed of fallible men, it has, indeed, been deformed by corruptions and abuſes; but corruptions and abuſes affect not

the nature and conſtitution of the church itſelf, but the parties only by whom they have been occaſioned.

To form a proper judgment, therefore, upon this ſubject, recourſe muſt be had to thoſe records which contain an account of the original plan, upon which the church was eſtabliſhed by its Divine Founder. In them we find, that every figure under which it is deſcribed, has application, not to a confuſed multitude of men independent of each other, but to a regular ſociety under an appointed government. It is "a body having many members, of which CHRIST is the head." It is "a kingdom of which CHRIST is the king." It is "a family," of which CHRIST is the maſter. It is "a building fitly framed together, built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apoſtles, JESUS CHRIST himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone." It is the fold of ſheep, of which JESUS CHRIST is the ſhepherd. All which ſeveral deſcriptions lead to the ſame general idea of aſſociation, order, and agreement, ſubſiſting among the ſeveral members of the church, conſidered as parts of the ſame body; in conſequence of which, they regularly diſcharge their reſpective offices, continuing in conſtant dependence upon the Head, from whence their power of life and action is derived.

Such then is the nature and conſtitution of the church, as it was originally eſtabliſhed by its Supreme Head; from whom the Apoſtles, and their ſucceſſors the biſhops, have derived their commiſſion; a branch of that commiſſion which JESUS CHRIST received from his FATHER; by virtue of which they challenge obedience from every member of the Chriſtian church, as to the ſtewards or chief officers in that ſpiritual ſociety, over which they are authoriſed to preſide. And ſuch muſt be the concluſion upon this ſubject, unleſs we ſuppoſe, either that the Apoſtles underſtood not the nature of the commiſſion with which they were entruſted, or that for the ſake of aggrandizing their own characters, they wilfully miſrepreſented it.

DISCOURSE III.

Of the Sin of SCHISM.

THE circumſtance of the church being *a ſociety of* CHRIST's *forming*, for the regular adminiſtration of the affairs of his kingdom, "for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of CHRIST," Eph. iv. 12, points out the nature and quality of the ſin of SCHISM.

The word tranſlated *Schiſm*,* which in modern language ſcarce ſeems to have an appropriate idea annexed to it, is in the original derived from a *verb*,

* The word *Schiſm* (according to the learned HAMMOND) comes from the paſſive verb, σχιζομαι, which regularly ſignifies being cut, or divided; but yet the ſin of ſchiſm being an action upon himſelf, not a paſſion from any other, it was of the nature of thoſe paſſives which note reciprocal action, or paſſion; which ST. JUDE fully expreſſes by ἀποδιορίζοντες ἑαυτους, the title which he gives the grand Gnoſtick Schiſmatics, that they cut off or divide themſelves from the church. HAMMOND, therefore, underſtands the paſſive verb, in this caſe, to be of the nature of the Hebrew Hithpael, which denotes reciprocal action; which he conſiders to be very uſeful to ſet down the true notion of *ſchiſm*, as it differs from all other things that border on it, particularly from *excommunication*, which is the cutting

which ſignifies to cut, divide, or ſeparate; it muſt, therefore, relate to ſome body capable of being divided or ſeparated. Upon reference to the firſt chapter of ST. PAUL's Epiſtle to the Epheſians, we find that the church is called the body, of which CHRIST is the head. "The GOD of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," ſaith the Apoſtle, "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body."

The church then, in the figurative language of Scripture, is the body of CHRIST. Upon further reference to the twelfth chapter of the firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians, we find the ſame Apoſtle arguing, from the connection which ſubſiſts between the members of the natural body, to the neceſſity of a ſimilar connection ſubſiſting between the members of the ſpiritual body. That no ſchiſm, no diviſion or ſeparation, ſhould take place in one body more than in the other. "For," ſaith the Apoſtle,* "as the natural body is one, and hath many members, and all

off *others* from the church; whereas ST. PAUL, ſpeaking of the heretical Gnoſtics, which were ſchiſmatics too, ſaith that they were αυτοκατακριτοι, ſuch as condemned and excommunicated themſelves; which is as perfect an evidence of the reciprocal action or paſſion, as could be.—HAMMOND's Works, vol. ii. Anſwer to Schiſm diſarmed; p. 69, 70.

* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

the members of that one body, being many, are one body; ſo alſo is CHRIST, (or the church of CHRIST, conſidered as that body, of which individual Chriſtians are the members.) For by one ſpirit are we all baptized into one body." And the intention of our being thus baptized into this one body, or church of CHRIST, is, as the Apoſtle* elſewhere informs us, that we ſhould "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of GOD, unto a perfect man; unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of CHRIST: That we ſhould not, like children, be toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but ſpeaking the truth in love, might grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even CHRIST; from whom the whole body," of the church, "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the body, unto the edifying of itſelf in love."

From whence it appears, that one great object in the eſtabliſhment of the church upon earth was, that

* Epheſ. iv. 13, 14, &c.

it might become one great comprehenſive ſociety continually increaſing in numbers and in ſtrength; a firm, compact, indiſſoluble body, ſo fitly joined together, and connected by the harmony of its component parts, as thereby to be beſt calculated to produce glory to GOD, and love among men.

"The church (ſays Biſhop GROVE, in his diſcourſe on Church Communion) is a body of men, ſeparated from the reſt of the world, or called out of the world, (as the word εκκαλειν, to call out, from whence *Eccleſia* is derived, ſignifies) united to GOD and themſelves by a divine covenant. The church is united to GOD, for it is a religious ſociety inſtituted for the worſhip of GOD; and they are united among themſelves, and to each other, becauſe it is but one body, which requires an union of all its parts. This union with GOD, and to each other, which conſtitutes a church, is made by divine covenant. For the Chriſtian church is nothing elſe but ſuch a ſociety of men, as is in covenant with GOD through CHRIST." Now as no covenant can *originally* be made for GOD, but *by GOD himſelf;* it hence follows, that *GOD only* can make or conſtitute a church.

From this deſcription of the church, as the body of CHRIST, the term *ſchiſm*, in its application to it,

denotes a diviſion among the members of which that body is compoſed; occaſioned by a want of obedience to the government which CHRIST, by his Apoſtles, ſettled in the church; and a conſequent ſeparation from its communion, in contradiction to the divine plan of its eſtabliſhment; the deſign of which was, that all Chriſtians ſhould be joined together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame worſhip; "continuing," according to the primitive pattern, "in the Apoſtles' doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts ii. 42.

Such is the nature and quality of ſchiſm; which ſin conſiſts in its being a direct violation of the order and government eſtabliſhed in the church, thereby conſtituting a ſpecies of rebellion againſt its Divine Founder.

Indeed as the word *church*, through the modern confuſion of language, is underſtood to be applicable to all ſocieties of profeſſing Chriſtians, by what authority and under what teachers ſoever they may be aſſembled, there can be no ſuch ſin as that of *ſchiſm* in the world. For the ſin of ſchiſm pre-ſuppoſes the eſtabliſhment of a certain ſociety by Divine authority, with which all Chriſtians are obliged to communicate. Now if the church, inſtead of being a ſociety eſta-

bliſhed under a particular government, for the purpoſe of Chriſtians living in communion with it, is any thing, and every thing that men pleaſe to make it, a ſeparation from it becomes impracticable; becauſe a ſociety muſt have acquired ſome regular and collected form, before a ſeparation from it can take place. But upon the ſuppoſition that every ſociety of profeſſing Chriſtians is the church of CHRIST; the church, in that caſe, conſiſts of as many ſeparate ſocieties under different forms, as there are fanciful men to make them; and, conſequently, is no longer in that collected ſtate, in which it is poſſible to live in communion with it. For before the members of the church can live in communion with each other, the church, as a ſociety, muſt be at unity in itſelf.

To determine upon the legality or illegality of a practice, from man's opinion concerning it, is to ſet up a ſtandard of judgment which is perpetually varying, and on that account ever liable to deceive. Chriſtians, in religious matters at leaſt, have a more ſure word than that of man to depend upon; if they are wiſe, therefore, they will not ſuffer themſelves to be governed by a leſſer authority, when they have a greater at hand always to direct them. Cuſtom has, indeed, ſo far reconciled us to the diviſions that have

taken place among Chriſtians, that they are no longer ſeen in the light in which they were ſeen in the primitive days of the church; whilſt charity, forbidding us to ſpeak harſhly of the ſpiritual condition of our brethren, has in a manner tended to efface the ſin of ſchiſm from our minds. But though we preſume to judge no man, leaving all judgment to that Being who is alone qualified to make allowance for the ignorance, invincible prejudice, imperfect reaſonings, and miſtaken judgments of his frail creatures; yet muſt it not from hence be concluded, that it is a matter of indifference, whether Chriſtians communicate with the church or not; or that there is a doubt upon the ſubject of ſchiſm, whether it be a ſin or not.

"There is one plain rule to direct all men in this enquiry; that wherever there is a church eſtabliſhed by public authority, if there be nothing ſinful in its conſtitution and worſhip, we are bound to communicate with that church, and to reject the communion of all other parties and ſects of Chriſtians. For the advantage always lies on the ſide of authority. No publick eſtabliſhment can juſtify ſinful communion; but if there be nothing ſinful in the communion of the national church, which is eſtabliſhed by publick authority, to ſeparate from ſuch a church, is both diſo-

bedience to the ſupreme authority in the ſtate, and a ſchiſm from the church." "Now (proceeds the Biſhop, in another part of his diſcourſe) if *ſchiſm* be an innocent thing, and the true Catholic ſpirit, (as from the preſent too prevailing practice among Chriſtians we might be induced to think it was) I have no more to ſay, but that the whole Chriſtian church, ever ſince the Apoſtles' times, has been in a very great miſtake. But if ſchiſm be a very great ſin, and that which will, according to the judgment of the primitive church, damn us as ſoon as adultery and murder, then it muſt be a dangerous thing to communicate with ſchiſmatics."*

Indeed, with reſpect to the reality and heinous quality of this ſin of *ſchiſm*, it ſcarcely ſeems poſſible for Chriſtians, who enter ſufficiently deep into the ſubject, to entertain two opinions.

Looking into the writings of St. PAUL, I ſee ſchiſm ſpoken of as a *carnal ſin*; and that this ſin conſiſts in a ſeparation from the communion, and a ſetting up of teachers independent of the government, and deſtructive of the unity of the Chriſtian church. A ſin, which, beſides its being the parent of confuſion

* Diſcourſe of Church Communion, by Biſhop GROVE. See London Caſes, No. 1.

and diſorder in the church, is moreover deſtructive of that charity or brotherly love, by which it was deſigned that Chriſtians ſhould be joined together.

In the epiſtle of ST. JUDE mention is made of thoſe who "periſhed in the *gainſaying of* CORE," even thoſe who *ſeparated* themſelves, being ſenſual, having not the Spirit. From whence it is to be concluded, that there is a ſin in the Chriſtian church, anſwering to that of KORAH in the Jewiſh; ſome reſemblance, conſequently, there muſt be between the two churches, to juſtify, in this caſe, the Apoſtle's application: for if there were not, the method adopted by the Apoſtles and primitive writers, of making the law miniſter to the explanation of the Goſpel, by conſidering the former as the intended type of the latter, (a complete ſpecimen of which we are preſented with in the Epiſtle to the Hebrews) would have been calculated, not ſo much to inform as to lead their diſciples into error.

By referring to the ſixteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers, we find in what the ſin of KORAH conſiſted. KORAH conformed to the law, the doctrine, and worſhip, which GOD had appointed; for we do not read that there was any diſpute upon either of theſe points. But KORAH, being a prieſt of an

inferior order, wanted to encroach upon the authority of AARON the high-prieſt, and to continue no longer under ſubjection to him. The ſin, therefore, of KORAH conſiſted in his rebelling againſt the order of government eſtabliſhed in that church, of which he was an inferior miniſter. An order of government, therefore, muſt exiſt in the Chriſtian church, againſt which it is a ſin to rebel; otherwiſe the ſin of KORAH, deſcribed in the Old Teſtament, and the gainſaying of Core, mentioned by ST. JUDE,* cannot conſtitute parallel caſes.

That a particular order of government has been eſtabliſhed in the Chriſtian church, an unanſwerable proof has been already brought from the writings of ST. PAUL,† where he calls upon the members of the church "to obey thoſe that had the rule over them, and to ſubmit themſelves." To give force, therefore, to the Apoſtle's injunction in this caſe, ſpiritual governors, there muſt be in the church, to whoſe authority ſubmiſſion is required. In withdrawing, therefore, that ſubmiſſion, in conſequence of certain ſelf-ſufficient miniſters of an inferior order ſetting themſelves up as heads and leaders of ſeparate congregations, independent of their reſpective biſhops,

* Epiſt. of JUDE, 11. † Heb. xiii. 17.

the ſin of ſchiſm in the Chriſtian church, correſponding with that of KORAH and his aſſociates, alluded to by ST. JUDE, originally conſiſted.

The light in which this ſin was ſeen in the primitive days of the church, makes it a ſubject of ſerious conſideration. The Apoſtles, and thoſe who lived with them, could not be miſtaken upon this point. Knowing what the conſtitution of that church was, over which they were commiſſioned to preſide, they muſt know in what the ſin of thoſe perſons conſiſted, who ſet themſelves up in oppoſition to it. An appeal, therefore, to their writings in this caſe muſt afford unanſwerable evidence to all who are open to conviction.

What ST. PAUL and ST. JUDE have ſaid upon it has been already remarked. To which the teſtimony of ST. JOHN may be added, where, in his third epiſtle, he ſpeaks of one DIOTREPHES, who, in the true ſpirit of KORAH, "loving to have the pre-eminence,"* created a diviſion among the brethren, by not ſubmitting himſelf to ST. JOHN, who was his ſuperior in the church. And whatever different interpretations, with the view of favouring different opinions, have been put upon the Apoſtolic writings, evidence is to be produced from the primitive writers

* 3 JOHN 9.

of the church ſo deciſive, as to take away all reaſonable ground for diſpute on this ſubject.

It will be ſufficient to produce one of theſe writers; becauſe, if his authority, direct to this point, be not ſufficient to determine the opinion of every reaſonable man, all further appeal becomes unneceſſary. The writer here meant is ST. IGNATIUS, one of the firſt biſhops and martyrs of the church, who lived with the Apoſtles, and was a diſciple of ST. JOHN; a circumſtance, which, it is preſumed, places his teſtimony in the moſt unexceptionable point of view; becauſe, what he has written muſt, in fairneſs of conſtruction, be conſidered as expreſſing the ſenſe of the Apoſtles; his authority, conſequently, becomes equal to theirs upon this ſubject.

Thus then, in one part of his writings, he admoniſhes those whom he addreſſes, "to beware of the poiſon of ſeducers;" by whom were meant the ſchiſmatics, or thoſe who ſeparated from the church in thoſe times; for, continues this holy man, "he is without, who does any thing without the biſhop and preſbytery and deacon, and ſuch an one is defiled in his conſcience."*

* Ο δὲ ἐκτὸς ὤν, ὅτος ἐστὶν ὁ χωρὶς τῦ Ἐπισκόπυ, καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν Διακόνων τι πράσσων ὁ τοιῦτος μεμίανται τῇ συνειδήσει. IGN. Epiſt. to the Trallians.

In another part of his writings, referring to the obedience due from all orders in the church to the biſhops, this holy man ſpeaks thus: "Flee diviſions, as the beginning of evils; all of you follow your biſhops, as JESUS CHRIST, the Father; and the preſbyters, as the Apoſtles; and reverence the deacons as the inſtitution of GOD. Let no man do any thing of what appertains to the church without the biſhop. Let that ſacrament be judged effectual and firm which is diſpenſed by the biſhop, or him to whom the biſhop has committed it. Wherever the biſhop is, there let the people be. It is not lawful without the biſhop either to baptiſe, or celebrate the offices; but whenſoever it may be approved of by him, according to the good pleaſure of GOD; that every thing ye do may be firm and ſafe."*

Again, ſpeaking of thoſe who act without the biſhop, he obſerves, "As CHRIST did nothing with-

* Τα σχισματα φευγετε ως αρχην κακων. Παντες τω Επισκοπω ακολουθειτε ως Κριστος Ιησους τω Πατρι, και τω Πρεσβυτεριω ως τοις Αποστολοις; τους δε Διακονους εντρεπεσθε, ως Θεου εντολην. Μηδεις χωρις Επισκοπου τι πρασσετω των ανηκοντων εις την εκκλησιαν· βεβαια ευχαριστια ηγεισθω, ἡ υπο του Επισκοπου ουσα, ἡ ω αν αυτος επιτρεψη. Οπου αν φανη ο Επισκοπος, εκει το πληθος εστω. Ουκ εξον εστι χωρις του Επισκοπου, ουτε βαπτιζειν, ουτε δοχην ποιειν. Αλλ' οταν εκεινω δοκη και' ευαρεστησιν Θεου, ινα ασφαλες ἡ και βεβαιον παν ο αν πρασσητε.—IGNAT. Epiſt. to the Smyrnæans.

out his Father, ſo neither do ye, whether preſbyter, deacon, or laick, any thing without the Biſhop."* "Give heed to your Biſhop, that GOD may hearken to you: my ſoul for theirs who ſubject themſelves under the obedience of their biſhop, preſbyters, and deacons; and let me take my lot with them in the LORD."

The foregoing paſſages, to which others might be added, from the writings of IGNATIUS, ſpeak ſo plainly and decidedly in favour of the government eſtabliſhed in the church, and ſo directly in condemnation of all ſeparation from it, that a particular comment upon them is unneceſſary. They ſpeak a plain language, expreſſive of the ſentiments of the holy men who lived in the Apoſtolic age; and the general concluſion from them is, that whoever was in communion with the biſhop, the ſupreme governor of the church upon earth, was in communion with CHRIST, the head of it; and whoever was not in communion with the biſhop, was thereby cut off from

* "Ωσπερ ϰ᾽ ὁ Κυριος ἀνευ τȣ Πατρος ȣ̓δεν ποιει, ȣ̔τω ϰ᾽ ὑμεις ἀνευ τȣ Ἐπισϰοπȣ, μηδε Πρεσβυτερος, μηδε Διαϰονος, μηδε ὁ λαιϰος."—IGNAT. Epiſt. to the Magnes.

"Τω Ἐπισϰοπω προσεχετε, ἱνα ϰ᾽ ὁ Θεος ὑμιν ἀντιψυχον ἐγω τȣ̃ ὑποτασσομενων ξύσι Ἐπισϰοπω, Πρεσβυτεριω, Διαϰονοις· μετ᾽ ἀυτων μοι το μερος γενοιτο ἐχειν παρα Θεω."—Epiſt. to POLYCARP.

communion with CHRIST; and that ſacraments not adminiſtered by the biſhop, or thoſe commiſſioned by him, were not only ineffectual to the parties, but moreover, like the offerings of KORAH, provocations againſt the LORD.

If, then, the conſtitution of the Chriſtian church be the ſame now that it was in the days of the Apoſtles, (and if it be not, the time when, and the authority by which, an alteration was produced in it, ſhould be aſcertained) the ſin of ſchiſm, however we may attempt to palliate it, is preciſely the ſame ſin it then was. And if the primitive writers of the church ſpoke ſo decidedly upon this ſubject, with a view of guarding its members againſt ſo heinous a ſin, where it reſpected chiefly the ſeparation of inferior miniſters from the juriſdiction of their reſpective biſhops; what would they have ſaid upon it, had they lived to mark the extent to which this ſin is carried in the days in which we live? If they conſidered ſchiſm, as it was then practiſed, as the greateſt of all crimes, becauſe it directly counteracted the Divine plan in the eſtabliſhment of the church; what language would they have found ſufficiently ſtrong to expreſs their abhorrence of that Babel of confuſion, which now prevails in the Chriſtian world? If the

preſervation of the government of the church conſtituted an object of that importance in their eyes, as to ſubject any the leaſt oppoſition to it to their ſevereſt cenſure; what muſt they have thought of that licentious practice, which leads to its total diſſolution? when, in conſequence of all ideas reſpecting the nature of the church having been in a great meaſure loſt among us, men look not beyond themſelves for that commiſſion, by which they preſume to enter upon the miniſtry of holy things; drawing congregations after them, and thereby dividing Chriſtian profeſſors into as many ſects and parties, as there are ſelf-ſufficient teachers to be found, who have an end to anſwer, or a paſſion to gratify, upon the occaſion.

The opinions of the preſent day, unhappily for us, tend to countenance a general diſſolution of eſtabliſhments; as if men are different creatures now from what they were in any former ſtate of the world; and grown too wiſe, in this age of reaſon, as it is called, to ſubmit to any ordinances that have not received the ſanction of their own immediate appointment.

But if it be true, that CHRIST formed only one church, there can be but one communion in it; and if that church be a viſible ſociety, diſtinctly known by its miniſters and ſacraments, as it moſt certainly

is, a wilful ſeparation from it muſt be rebellion againſt the Divine ordinance, whenever it takes place. For ignorance with reſpect to the nature of the Chriſtian church, can make no alteration in the plan upon which Divine Wiſdom has formed it: conſequently ſchiſm, or a ſeparate communion from that church, muſt, whatever ideas of prejudice or error may prevail on the ſubject, be an heinous ſin in the eyes of GOD.

To form a proper judgment upon this ſubject, we muſt not be governed by the opinions and practices of the world upon it; becauſe it ever has been the misfortune of the world, to be more fond of its own inventions than of GOD's commands. And there is this obvious reaſon for it; what man invents has a more ſtrict correſpondence with the corrupt inclinations of his depraved nature, than what GOD ordains: and hence it is, that we are ſo readily induced to ſubſtitute human imaginations in the place of Divine inſtitutions. The one are creatures of our own, and tend in a greater or leſs degree to the gratification of our humours and paſſions; the other, as controling our inclinations, and abridging our liberty, are on that account leſs welcome to the natural man.

To deal honeſtly with ourſelves, therefore, we ſhould place this ſubject upon the ground on which

it ought to ſtand. By proceeding thus, we ſhall find that one great object in the eſtabliſhment of the church, was to unite men by the bond of charity in conſtant communion with GOD and each other; that by entering upon a life of peace, of love, and fellowſhip with the Holy Ghoſt upon earth, the members of it might be prepared for that more perfect ſtate provided for them in a better world.

A church, the members of which were to be thus joined together in Chriſtian fellowſhip, preſented a picture of too heavenly a ſociety for the grand enemy of mankind to behold without envy; and which, if ſuffered to continue in a perfect ſtate, would moſt certainly tend to render thoſe beings happy, whom, from the creation of the world, it has been the conſtant employment of this *deſtroyer*, as he is emphatically called, to render miſerable. From the moment, therefore, that the church was founded upon earth, the malice of this evil one has been directed againſt it. And it not being in his power to deſtroy the church, (the Divine Founder of it having expreſsly declared, that the gates of hell ſhall not finally prevail againſt it) his next object has been to render it as ineffectual to the purpoſe of its eſtabliſhment as poſ-

ſible; by ſowing the ſeeds of diviſion where only thoſe of love and harmony were deſigned to grow.

Herein, then, conſiſts the nature of ſchiſm; and ſuch is the origin of it: it proceeds, for the moſt part, from that ſpirit of pride and independence, which caſt the devil out of heaven; and which, it is to be feared, will diſqualify many for admiſſion into that bleſſed place. And the heinouſneſs of the ſin conſiſts in this, that it is not only a ſyſtem of oppoſition to the Divine will, but that, ſo far as it prevails, it counteracts the gracious purpoſe which CHRIST had in view in the eſtabliſhment of his church; by dividing and ſeparating thoſe members, which it was his deſign to unite by an harmonious interchange of ſervice and fellowſhip.

Wherever, then, there is a *wilful ſeparation* from the communion of the church of CHRIST, there, according to the original idea upon this ſubject, a diviſion of CHRIST's myſtical body takes place; and there this ſin of ſchiſm is to be found.

Such, then, being the nature and conſequences of ſchiſm, we cannot be ſurpriſed at finding the Apoſtles and primitive writers making uſe of ſuch ſtrong language, whenever it became the ſubject of conſideration; with the view of guarding their diſciples againſt what

appeared to them, and what, it ſhould be ſuppoſed, muſt appear to every one who duly conſiders the nature of CHRIST'S church, to be a ſin of the moſt dangerous kind; becauſe, to omit leſſer conſiderations, it is a ſin, whereby a man cuts himſelf off from the means of grace, and expoſeth himſelf to the danger of denying the faith. A learned divine* of the laſt century, who lived to ſee the effects of this ſin fully exemplified in the complete deſtruction of his own church and country, after having collected the numberleſs ſtriking paſſages from the writings of the ancient fathers relative to this ſubject, thus concludes upon it: "It is but a ſmall part (ſays he) of the character of *ſchiſm*, that it is contrary to faith, contrary to charity, and to all the advantages which belong to a member of the church—the benefits of prayer and ſacraments; that it is as bad as hereſy, and that there never was any hereſy in the church which was not founded in it; and that it is conſtantly forced, in its own defence, to conclude in ſome hereſy or other: each of theſe particulars, and all of them taken together, are but a ſmall part of the character which the ancient fathers of the church give us of the ſin of ſchiſm."

* HAMMOND.

It would draw out this diſcourſe into an inconvenient length, were I to bring forward one-tenth part of what has been written upon this ſubject, by thoſe who ſaw it in the ſame light in which it was ſeen by the learned divine juſt mentioned. One additional quotation from Archbiſhop SHARP ſhall, therefore, ſuffice for our preſent purpoſe.

"If human conjectures (ſays the Archbiſhop) about the reaſons and cauſes of Divine judgments may be allowed, it will appear from hiſtory and experience, that there has been as much war and blood-ſhed cauſed in the world, as many nations deſolated, as many churches ruined, by the malignity and evil influence of this ſin of ſchiſm, as any other. And if ever GOD in judgment ſhall think fit to give over this flouriſhing church of ours as a prey to its enemies, we ſhall have good reaſon to believe, that the unneceſſary diviſions and quarrels among ourſelves had a great hand in bringing on the judgment."

It muſt ſeem ſtrange to a modern Chriſtian, that a ſin, of which the world now appears to know nothing, ſhould be thus deſcribed. He will be apt to conclude, either that the church of the preſent day muſt be a very different ſociety from what it once was, or that the old writers upon this ſubject were

wonderfully miſtaken in their opinion. But if he be a wiſe man, he will conſider, that ſhould what has been ſaid upon this ſubject be true, his paſt ignorance upon it cannot poſſibly make it otherwiſe. He will conſequently think it to be his duty to bring the matter to a fair examination, and ſuffer his judgment to be determined by the evidence.

"The ſum of all (to make uſe of the words of Biſhop GROVE) is in ſhort this. Beſides theſe men who juſtify their ſeparation from the Church of England by charging her with requiring ſinful terms of communion, (which is the only thing that can juſtify their ſeparation, if it could be proved;) there are others who ſeparate lightly and wantonly, for want of a due ſenſe of the nature of church communion, and our obligations to preſerve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. They have no notion at all of a church, or no notion of *one church*, or know not wherein the unity and communion of this church conſiſts; and theſe men think it is indifferent, whether they communicate with any church at all; or that they ſecure themſelves from ſchiſm, by communicating ſometimes with one church, and ſometimes with another; that they may chooſe their church according to their own fancies, and change them

again whenever their humour alters. But I hope, whoever conſiders carefully what I have now writ, and attends to thoſe paſſionate exhortations of the Goſpel to peace, and unity, and brotherly love, which cannot be preſerved *but in one communion*, which is the unity of the body of CHRIST, and the peace and love of fellow-members; will not only heartily pray to the GOD of Peace, to reſtore peace and unity to his church, but be careful how he divides the church himſelf; and will uſe his utmoſt endeavours to heal the preſent ſchiſms and diviſions of the church of CHRIST."*

* Should my reader wiſh to ſee the ſubject of Church Communion more fully handled, he will not fail to meet with complete ſatisfaction, by reference to a diſcourſe, entitled "A Perſuasive to Communion with the Church of England," by Dr. GROVE, biſhop of Chicheſter, to be met with among the "*London Cases*." And ſhould he be deſirous of having the ground on which the two preceding chapters ſtand, more firmly eſtabliſhed, (ſhould ſuch additional eſtabliſhment be judged neceſſary) I can refer him to no publication, in which he will find more information on church matters brought into a ſmaller compaſs, than in "LESLEY's Diſcourſe concerning the Qualifications requiſite to adminiſter the Sacraments:" the ſupplement to which preſents him with a ſummary detail of authorities for Epiſcopacy, taken out of the Fathers and Councils in the firſt four hundred and fifty years after CHRIST: a detail, which appears to leave nothing undone, that human evidence is capable of doing, for the ſatisfaction of every intelligent reader on this ſubject.

DISCOURSE IV.

On the Reasons generally advanced to justify a Separation from the Church;—and first, on the supposed Spiritual Qualification of the Party undertaking the Office of the Ministry.

HAVING diſpatched the two leading parts of our ſubject, which reſpect the conſtitution of the church, conſidered as the body of CHRIST, and the nature of ſchiſm or *wilful* ſeparation from it; we proceed to conſider the reaſons generally advanced to juſtify that ſeparation. For at the ſame time that men ſcruple not to commit the ſin, they feel unwilling to acknowledge themſelves ſinners; and are therefore induſtrious in finding out pleas, of one kind or another, which may tend, if not to do away, at leaſt to make the ſin ſit eaſy upon their minds. Hence it is, that, in the preſent day, we have ſo many definitions of ſchiſm, differing more or leſs from the ſenſe originally and properly annexed

to that word, through which the definers for the moſt part impoſe on themſelves and others; excluding themſelves by the fallacy of words, from the apparent commiſſion of that ſin, which at the ſame time actually attaches to their caſe.

The firſt and moſt general plea advanced upon this occaſion reſpects the holineſs, or ſpiritual qualification, of the party who undertakes the office of the miniſtry. This is neither more nor leſs than the plea of KORAH revived. The popular argument in the mouth of KORAH was, that "AARON took too much upon himſelf; ſeeing that all the congregation was holy:" the inference from which ſeems to be, that the people had no need of the miniſtration of AARON, but could miniſter unto themſelves. Upon this plea, the offspring of ſpiritual pride, KORAH and his company gathered themſelves together againſt MOSES and AARON; and the ſixteenth chapter of the book of Numbers has recorded the fatal event that terminated the conteſt.

But had we no leſſon of experience upon this head to draw from the Jewiſh hiſtory, that of our own has taught us to view this plea with a very ſuſpicious eye; becauſe it has been miniſterial to the greateſt calamities. We remember, that it was in the reign

of the *Saints*, as they were *then* called, the invaders of the prieſthood in thoſe days of confuſion, that the Conſtitution of this country was completely overturned in the laſt century; when preaching, and faſting, and praying, were made uſe of as convenient cloaks for rebellion, ſacrilege, and murder. We are therefore afraid, when we hear talk of *gifted men*, leſt an increaſe of their number ſhould lead to a repetition of the ſame diſmal ſcenes.

But granting that the *holineſs* of the party, on whoſe account many feel themſelves juſtified in ſeparating from the church, was really ſuch as they think it to be; it does not authoriſe the poſſeſſor of it to take upon himſelf an office to which he has not been regularly appointed.

Our SAVIOUR, it will be allowed, poſſeſſed holineſs in a *ſuperlative* degree; for "to him," we read, "the Spirit was not given by meaſure." JOHN iii. 34. But our SAVIOUR "glorified not himſelf to be made an high-prieſt;" but He that ſaid unto him "Thou art my ſon." Heb. v. "This honour (ſays the Apoſtle) *no man taketh unto himſelf*, but he that is called of GOD, as was AARON." Now AARON was called by an *outward* call from GOD, communicated to him through the medium of MOSES; from

whom, as GOD's prime miniſter, he received a formal appointment to his high office before all the people. EXOD. xxviii. And from the circumſtance of our bleſſed SAVIOUR delivering the commiſſion for collecting and governing his church, not to his diſciples at large, but to his eleven Apoſtles, purpoſely convened by him on the occaſion, (as we read, MATT. xxviii. 16;) the concluſion may be drawn, that it was the deſign of the Divine Founder of the church, that the ſacred office of miniſtering in it ſhould be ſubject to that control and direction, which was beſt calculated to give effect to his Divine inſtitution. Upon this idea have the governors of the church uniformly proceeded, in the diſcharge of that commiſſion, from the days of the Apoſtles down to the preſent time.

Thus ſtands the fact; a fact not to be controverted; and reaſon teaches us, that the wiſdom of GOD has been manifeſted upon this occaſion.

The church, as it has already been obſerved, is a ſociety; and every ſociety is diſtinguiſhed from the general maſs of the community by its order and government. To the eſtabliſhment of order and government, a regular appointment of choſen men to the adminiſtration of particular offices is eſſential.

But if any man, independent of all regular appointment, is to take upon himſelf the diſcharge of an office, for which he may feel himſelf diſpoſed, or think himſelf qualified; the ſociety having no longer any ſecurity for the proper management of its concerns, the end for which it has been collected being thereby fruſtrated, its conſequent diſſolution muſt enſue.

This mode of reaſoning, ſo far as temporal affairs are concerned, we readily admit. Let it be applied, as it ought to be, to the caſe of the church, conſidered as a ſociety, formed by GOD under a particular government calculated to promote the end of its inſtitution; and we ſhall conclude in one caſe, as in the other, that perſonal qualifications furniſh no diſpenſation for an outward appointment to an office of truſt; becauſe this is the only ſecurity which the members of the church can have againſt impoſture; it being the only criterion by which they can judge, who are the miniſters of the church, and who are not.

We do not ſay that the perſonal qualification of the miniſter in ſpiritual matters, is not requiſite to the proper diſcharge of his ſacred office; becauſe it confeſſedly is ſo to a certain degree, and on that account truly deſirable: but what we would be un-

derſtood to ſay is, that in the adminiſtration of an outward ſacrament, which is to be conſidered as the appointed means of ſpiritual communication from GOD to man; nothing is to be regarded as *abſolutely neceſſary*, but the *lawfulneſs of the commiſſion* by which it is adminiſtered. For it is the *commiſſion* which ſecures to us the Divine confirmation of the miniſterial act, and not the perſonal qualification of the miniſter; that the eye of the faithful may be directed to the proper object, and *GOD*, not *man*, receive the glory.

JUDAS received a commiſſion from our SAVIOUR to baptize, no leſs than the other Apoſtles. And there can be no doubt, but that the baptiſm adminiſtered by him was equally effectual with that adminiſtered by any other Apoſtle. Yet we read that this JUDAS was a devil. JOHN vi. From whence it is to be obſerved, that the power of Divine grace, happily for mankind, is not limited by the poorneſs of the inſtrument appointed to convey it; and that a miniſterial act performed by proper authority, may be valid to the parties to whom it is applied, be the performer of it ever ſo unworthy.*

* "*Sacramentum* non ex ejus manu eſtimandum eſſe a quo adminiſtratur, ſed velut ex ipſa DEI manu, a quo haud dubie profectum

"For this cauſe," ſays ST. BARNABAS, in his Catholic epiſtle, c. 5, "did CHRIST chooſe men who were exceeding ſinners, to be his apoſtles; to ſhew the greatneſs of his power and grace; and put the ineſtimable treaſure of his Goſpel into earthen veſſels, that the praiſe might be to GOD, and not to *men*."†

The idea of the perſonal ſanctity of the miniſter being neceſſary to the effectual adminiſtration of his office, conſtituted one of the earlieſt errors in the Chriſtian church; and has accompanied it through every ſtage of its progreſs. The effect of it, wherever it has prevailed, has been uniformly deſtructive of peace and unity; by fixing the eye of the Chriſtian worſhipper upon the *man*, rather than upon the *office*; by which means the perſons of miniſters being held in admiration, the commiſſion by which they have been authoriſed to act in the miniſtry has become an object of inferior conſideration.

But it ſhould be remembered, that there is an holineſs of *office*, independent of the holineſs of the

eſt: inde colligere licet nihil illi afferri vel auferri ejus dignitate per cujus manum traditur."—CALV. Inſtit. lib. iv. c. 15.

† Such, we ſhould remind the reader, is the principle laid down by our Church in her 26th Article.

miniſter; the former, being eſſential to the validity of the miniſterial act, is on that account not to be diſpenſed with, whilſt the latter only recommends and adorns it.

That theſe two qualifications ſhould always meet together, is doubtleſs a circumſtance moſt devoutly to be wiſhed; but as, through the infirmity of human nature, this will not always be the caſe, it ought to become an object of primary concern with us in our judgment upon this point, that the *greater* conſideration be at no time ſacrificed to the *leſſer* one.

Where the inward call of the Spirit is therefore pleaded as a warrant for undertaking the ſacred office, we have a right to expect that it ſhould be accompanied with the *outward* call, or a regular appointment to that office; becauſe reaſon tells us, that the end for which the church, as a ſociety, was inſtituted, requires that thus it ſhould be; becauſe, moreover, where there could be no poſſibility of deception in the party, as in the caſe of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, (a circumſtance which challenges particular conſideration) this conformity to order was judged neceſſary to be obſerved. And if our bleſſed SAVIOUR condeſcended to regulate his public exerciſe of a ſacred office by this rule of order, with the

view, doubtleſs, that it ſhould become obligatory upon every ſucceeding miniſter in his church; we need not heſitate to call it ſomething worſe than preſumption in man, upon the ground of any qualification whatever, to plead an exemption from it.

What zeal ſoever, therefore, a man may feel, and what qualification ſoever he may poſſeſs for the ſervice of GOD; ſtill GOD, to be ſerved acceptably, muſt be ſerved in his own way. Well-meaning people (and I wiſh to ſpeak of them with reſpect, for we may honour their principle at the ſame time that we condemn their practice) ſhould conſider, that good intention and regular practice are two very different things; and that the former can never make amends for the diſorder occaſioned by the defect of the latter. On this account it is, that the intention of the agent is never admitted as a ſanction for the irregularity of his act. UZZAH, it is probable, meant well, when "he put forth his hand to hold the ark." But UZZAH was ſtruck dead on the ſpot, for invading the office of the prieſthood. 1 Chron. xiii. 9. SAUL, it is preſumed, meant well, when, in the abſence of SAMUEL, he offered the burnt-offering. But the ſentence pronounced againſt him was, that in ſo doing "he "had done fooliſhly; that he had not kept the com-

mandments of the LORD his GOD, and that therefore his kingdom ſhould not continue." 1 Sam. xiii. 8. There is not a more common deception than that which ariſes from the perſuaſion that the act is juſtified by the *ſincerity* of the agent. *Sincerity*, it is to be obſerved, generally ſpeaking, ſignifies nothing more than that a perſon is earneſt in the purſuit of his object; that he really believes as he profeſſes, and acts as his beſt judgment directs. But this ſincerity may conſiſt with the moſt irregular practice, and the moſt unchriſtian diſpoſition. A man, for inſtance, may believe his own lie; and act upon it with the ſame confidence that another acts upon the truth: he may have a zeal for GOD's ſervice, but not according to knowledge; he may earneſtly purſue a wrong object, or a right one, by irregular means. In all ſuch caſes the ſcripture has furniſhed us with a general rule of judgment, where it tells us, that "a man is not crowned, except he ſtrive *lawfully*." And, "that there is a way which *ſeemeth right* unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." "There are excellent works," ſays Biſhop REYNOLDS, "which being done without the call of GOD, do not edify but diſturb the body. The way for the church to proſper and flouriſh is, for

every member to keep in his own rank and order; to remember his *own meaſure*; to act in his own ſphere, to manage his particular condition and relations with ſpiritual wiſdom and humility; the eye to do the work of an eye, the hand of an hand."

In ſhort, whatever ideas of ſerving GOD we may form to ourſelves, GOD is not to be ſerved by a breach of his commands. And this we may depend upon, that GOD will be beſt ſerved, when the attention of every perſon in his own order, ſhall be confined to the diſcharge of the duties appropriate to his particular ſtation.

DISCOURSE V.

On the Plea advanced by SEPARATISTS *from the* CHURCH, *that the* GOSPEL *is not preached in it.*

A FURTHER plea commonly advanced by Separatiſts is, that the Goſpel is not preached in our Church. Had it been ſaid, that the *Goſpel* of J. CALVIN was not preached there, we ſhould readily have pleaded guilty to the charge; but that the *Goſpel of* JESUS CHRIST is preached there, we certainly maintain, upon the authority of thoſe Scriptures from which it has been received.

The leading doctrine of CHRIST's Goſpel, in the judgment of ſome Chriſtians, is, that it holds out ſalvation to *certain choſen individuals*, excluſive of the general bulk of mankind. The doctrine of our church upon the ſubject is, that CHRIST died to purchaſe ſalvation for *all* men; all men, conſequently, are intereſted in that great event, though all men will not be in a condition to be benefited by it. The notion of *partial* ſalvation is founded upon certain

ſuppoſed abſolute decrees; of which ſome preachers talk much, but confeſſedly know nothing. The doctrine of *general* ſalvation, by which we mean ſalvation attainable *by all men upon certain conditions*, is founded upon the general ſcope and tenour of the holy writings, ſupported by particular paſſages direct to this purpoſe.

ST. JOHN, ſpeaking of JESUS CHRIST the righteous, ſtiles him "the propitiation for our ſins; and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of *the whole world*. 1 John ii. 2. It was the obſervation of ST. PETER, upon his eyes being opened to the general deſign of the Goſpel diſpenſation, "That GOD is no *reſpecter of perſons*: but in every nation, he that fear-eth Him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with Him." Acts x. 34. But the doctrine of J. CALVIN makes GOD the greateſt reſpecter of perſons; and that in a matter of the moſt eſſential importance.

In another part of the ſacred writings, we are told by GOD himſelf, that "He has no pleaſure in the death of him that dieth, but that he ſhould return from his evil way, and live." Ezek. xviii. 32.

But according to J. CALVIN, GOD has determined, by an *abſolute decree*, an event, which at the ſame time, in conformity with the foregoing declara-

tion, He does not wish should take place. The absurdity of such a supposition, which makes the God of truth contradict himself, need not be pointed out.

Once again; our SAVIOUR, to the question put to him, "LORD, are there few that be saved?" returned the following answer: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."* On this head common sense teaches us to reason thus. Upon the supposition that there was an arbitrary decree of GOD, ascertaining the number, and determining individually the persons, who shall be saved; this direction of our SAVIOUR was both vain and useless; because no striving of man could, in this case, produce any alteration in his condition. To direct a man to strive, when, in consequence of his fate being determined by an over-ruling power, striving could answer no purpose, would be something like locking a man up in prison, and calling upon him to come forth, while you kept the key of the prison-door in your pocket.

But if we read the whole of our SAVIOUR's answer on this occasion, we shall be convinced that the inability of the parties to enter in at the strait gate,

* Luke xiii. 24.

That the doctrine of *abſolute decrees* produces this effect is certain, from the concluſion too generally drawn from it; the profeſſors of it for the moſt part depending for ſalvation through CHRIST upon the ſtrength of a poſitive and irrevocable decree in their favour, antecedent to their birth, and not dependent on their actions; the too general conſequence of which has been, that inſtead of adorning the doctrine of GOD their Saviour in all things, which Chriſtians are called upon to do, many have been led to diſgrace it.

The remark of ERASMUS, the ſtrenuous and unanſwerable oppoſer of this doctrine, was this: "Of old (ſaid he) the Goſpel made men better; but the new-pretended goſpel made them much worſe." And in another epiſtle upon the ſame ſubject he wrote ſtill more ſtrongly. "This new goſpel (ſays he) founded upon the doctrine of *abſolute decrees*, has produced a new generation of obſtinate, impudent, hypocritical people, who are revilers, liars, deceivers; and who do not agree among themſelves, and are very uneaſy to others; who are ſeditious, furious, given to cavilling; and with whom I am ſo much diſſatisfied, that if I knew any town where none of them were, I would go thither, and chooſe to live in it."

This decisive judgment of ERASMUS upon the effects produced by the doctrine here alluded to, brings to my mind the answer made by an eminent preacher of it to some brethren who were enquiring into the success of his ministry. "I have made (replied he) many proselytes, and have a very full congregation; but (continued the preacher) all the effect I have found is, that I have preached a congregation of Christians into a congregation of devils."

I would not be understood as adopting all the harsh expressions that have been at different times made use of upon this subject; because, at any rate, the application of them does not belong to the well-meaning among these mistaken people; but my object is to point out the general ill effect of the doctrine itself. And so long as it tends to cherish an idea, that salvation through CHRIST is a thing independent of the personal condition of the party; the foregoing language made use of by ERASMUS, and the preacher, is not, so far as those persons are concerned, in whose mind such an idea prevails, too strong for it. So long as it shall be maintained to be sound doctrine, that the true saints of GOD, as they are called, may commit horrible and crying sins, die without repentance, and yet be sure of salvation; we ministers are

called upon by our office to ſay, that ſuch a doctrine is not of GOD; becauſe it teareth up the very foundation of religion, induceth all manner of profaneneſs in the world, and is expreſsly contrary to the whole current of ſcripture.

One of the old independents of the laſt century ſaid expreſsly, "Let any true ſaint of GOD be taken away in the very act of any known ſin, before it is poſſible for him to repent, I make no doubt or ſcruple of it, but he ſhall as ſurely be ſaved, as if he had lived to have repented of it;" and he inſtances in DAVID, in caſe he had been taken away, before he had repented of his adultery and murder. That ſome modern teachers of this doctrine are not behind hand with the old independent juſt mentioned, there is but too much reaſon to fear.

The remark made, therefore, upon this ſubject by an eminent biſhop* of our church, is not ſo ſtrictly confined to the wild ſchiſmatics of former days, as, for the credit of the preſent age, we could wiſh it was. "The fanatical ſects (ſaid he) that ſprang up in abundance, amid the confuſions of the laſt century, had ſo corrupted the word of GOD by their impure gloſſes on

* Biſhop HURD. Sermons at Lincoln's-Inn.

the Gospel doctrine of grace, that the age became immoral on principle, and under the name of *saints*, engendered a hateful brood of profligate Antinomians, *i. e.* a sort of Christians, if they may be so called, who turned the grace of GOD into licentiousness; and to magnify his goodness, very conscientiously transgressed his laws. In a word, they taught that the elect were above ordinances, and might be saved without, nay in defiance of, the moral law."

Upon examining this doctrine closely, the deformity of which is so striking, that it is a matter of astonishment how it has ever gained credit in the world, we shall find it to be less built upon the word of scripture, than upon the vain conceit of man; which renders him a mere passive being in the work of salvation, and means of grace in a great measure useless institutions.

The first imagination that possesses the mind of an ignorant man upon the subject of the Divine decrees is, that in every thing relating to his salvation GOD must work in him both to will and to do, and therefore he must wait GOD's time. This idea, though true in its proper sense, is carried by him to that extreme, that if he be called upon to attend his church, and put himself under the word; he will tell

you, that means of grace can be of no use to him, till GOD shall be pleased to open his heart. Should he be reminded, that the Gospel condition upon which he must expect to receive is, that he should ask; and that having the use of his legs, he is as able to walk to church as to any other place: his answer is, that he does not feel the will to do it; and that GOD will make "his people willing in the day of his power." Ps. cx. 3. In this confidence he lives an heathenish life, without GOD in the world, waiting for that compulsive act of Divine power, by which he is to be brought into a state of salvation.

Feeling at some future period of his life, perhaps, some more than common impression made upon him by religious subjects, a second imagination takes possession of his mind. Considering this impression as the immediate operation of that Divine power, which he has been waiting to experience, he now persuades himself that he is in the number of GOD's *elect people*, and that consequently his salvation is secure. Upon his being reminded, that he that "thinketh he standeth, must take heed lest he fall," his answer is, he cannot fall; for GOD will keep his elect from falling; He who has begun the work in them, will

complete it; ſo that the man who is once in a ſtate of ſalvation, muſt be always in it. When the caſe of DAVID, the man of GOD's own heart, is ſtated to him; or the text quoted, where that choſen veſſel ST. PAUL expreſſes an apprehenſion, leſt "after all his preaching to others, he himſelf ſhould be a caſt-away," he has a reply ſuited to the occaſion; that upon the ſuppoſition that the elect may commit grievous ſins, his comfort is, that their ſalvation cannot be endangered, becauſe no act of man can render void the Divine purpoſe in his favour.

Thus then, under the impreſſion of the firſt of theſe imaginations, the man neglects the uſe of the means of grace, upon the idea that his heart has not been opened by GOD to receive benefit from them; and becauſe he has no power of himſelf to help himſelf, he cannot be perſuaded to make uſe of that power which GOD has given him. Under the impreſſion of the ſecond, the means of grace are oft times conſidered by him to be of no conſequence, from the conviction that his ſalvation is effectually ſecured.

I do not ſay that this doctrine is carried to the ſame extent by every profeſſor of it: GOD forbid it ſhould. For there are degrees of folly, as there are degrees of wiſdom; and no extraordinary caſe can

conſtitute a proper ſtandard for general application. But there is one inſtance to be produced, which authoriſes my placing it in the light in which it is here placed, with the view of guarding my reader againſt it. One of my pariſhioners, who took his divinity, as many others perhaps may do, from ſome old puritanical writers of the laſt century, rather than from the Bible, maintained, I am ſorry to think, the above doctrine in its fulleſt extent. He has been heard to ſay, that ſhould he kill a man to-day, he ſhould certainly go to heaven to-morrow. His ſalvation, therefore, being, according to his own notion, perfectly ſecured, religious ordinances, as means of grace, to him were uſeleſs. He acted, therefore, but in conſiſtence with his doctrine, when, inſtead of frequenting a place of public worſhip on Sundays, he was generally occupied in attending his farm. But on this head we ſhall only ſay with SOUTH, that "what is nonſenſe upon a principle of reaſon, will never be ſenſe upon a principle of religion."

An additional anecdote, which furniſhes a moſt ſtriking proof of the ill effect of this dangerous doctrine in another way, ſhall be mentioned; becauſe it has fallen within my own knowledge.

Upon collecting through my pariſh, ſome time ſince, for the relief of the emigrant French prieſts, I found an almoſt general diſinclination among the diſſenters from the church to contribute. At length one, more open than the reſt, furniſhed the following reaſon for it; by telling me, that "CHRIST never died for thoſe prieſts; and therefore he had no feeling for them, or concern about them." Another, who had learnt his Chriſtianity in the ſame ſchool, upon my application to him on the ſame occaſion, immediately exclaimed, "What, Sir, to *a Roman?* give to a Roman! one that lives in ſuch errors: if I had ten thouſand guineas, I would not beſtow a ſingle mite upon him!"

Read, now, the ſtory of the good Samaritan; and judge how far ſuch a narrow-minded religion, which engroſſes all GOD's favours to its own profeſſors, and regards the reſt of mankind as objects in a condition beneath that of the beaſts that periſh, agrees with the enlarged and charitable ſpirit of the Goſpel. When the diſciples of our SAVIOUR would have called down fire from Heaven to deſtroy their enemies, our SAVIOUR rebuked them, by telling them, that "they knew not what ſpirit they were of." What would this SAVIOUR ſay to thoſe pro-

feſſors of his religion, who could ſuffer a fellow-creature to ſtarve at their doors, becauſe he lived in error?

In a word, let this doctrine of election and abſolute decrees, as it is often underſtood, and the effects produced by it upon the lives of ſome of its profeſſors, be compared with the revealed purpoſe of CHRIST's coming into the world, and the ſpirit of his religion; and let this be done fairly, without prejudice, and with an eye only to the truth, and it is impoſſible that any Chriſtian can longer be led captive by ſuch a deluſion.

The rule laid down, though not ſtrictly followed, by ST. AUGUSTINE, "that the more obſcure parts of ſcripture ſhould be interpreted by thoſe that are plain," is the only rule that will enable us to form a rational and conſiſtent judgment upon the doctrines of revelation.

That CHRIST came to redeem man in his general character from the conſequences of the fall, and to purchaſe for him thoſe means of renewed grace, which required only to be properly employed to become effectual to his ſalvation, conſtituted the eſſence of that glad tidings, which the birth of a SAVIOUR was intended to convey to a loſt world.

This doctrine, ſo plainly and fully revealed, ought in reaſon to overbalance every argument drawn from a few obſcure paſſages, which at firſt ſight may ſeem to look a contrary way. But this is a conſideration which ſeldom has its due weight with thoſe who entertain ſome ſingular conceit or opinion. Engroſſed with their own notions, they are not to be prevailed upon to make the general tenour of ſcripture the ſtandard for their doctrine; but are apt to bend and warp the expreſſions of it to their own particular purpoſe: and whilſt they eagerly lay hold of every paſſage that ſeems to countenance it, will hardly give a hearing to other texts, how plain ſoever, that might ſerve to ſet the ſubject in its true light. To this prejudice in favour of a pre-conceived opinion, added perhaps to a certain reſpect for the authority of names, is that doctrine in a great degree to be attributed, which places the conduct of a merciful CREATOR towards his fellow-creature in a light ſo very different from that in which the plaineſt texts of ſcripture authoriſe us to regard it.

In fact, thoſe parts of ST. PAUL's writings on which this partial doctrine is ſuppoſed to be founded, which has perplexed the minds of ſo many well-meaning people, were ſeen in a very different light

by the primitive Chriſtians; to whom they conveyed the ſame idea that they now convey to all who pay attention to the general tenour of the Apoſtle's argument. By them the Apoſtle has been conſidered as laying open the myſterious plan of Providence at that time taking place in the world, which reſpected the rejection of the Jews from their boaſted peculiarity as a nation, and the election of the Gentiles to a common participation with them in the privileges of the Chriſtian church; "that through CHRIST both Jew and Gentile, being reconciled unto GOD in one body by the croſs, might have an acceſs by one ſpirit unto the Father." Epheſ. ii. 18.

A want of attention to this leading circumſtance, relative to the Jewiſh nation being the choſen people of GOD, diſtinguiſhed by particular laws and privileges from all other nations, has given riſe to numberleſs errors, which have diſturbed the peace of the Chriſtian church, from the days of the Apoſtles to the preſent time. But in no inſtance has this want of diſcrimination led to more unchriſtian concluſions, than in the caſe now before us; in which the general declarations of Divine favour and vengeance, expreſſed by the election and rejection of *nations*, as ſuch, have, through a miſtaken interpret-

ation, become the ſubjects of *particular* and *perſonal* application.

For my own part, I do not take my faith from the writings of LUTHER, CALVIN, or the more ancient profeſſor of this doctrine, ST. AUGUSTINE; at the ſame time that I profeſs the higheſt reſpect for each of them; but from that fountain from whence alone it ought to be taken, *the word of* GOD. If ſome zealous men, from a laudable oppoſition to one dangerous doctrine, have been heated into a determined ſupport of another; I lament in them the infirmity of the human underſtanding, which is too apt, in avoiding one extreme, to be carried into its oppoſite. The unbalanced mind of man rarely ſuſtains itſelf in that due mean which reaſon and religion mark out. This has been the caſe in the ſubject under conſideration.

With the view of cutting up by the root the *doctrine of merit*, which had conſtituted one of the groſſeſt corruptions of the church of Rome, ſome of the firſt foreign reformers brought forward that of *abſolute unconditional election, and irreſiſtible grace.*

This was, indeed, to do the buſineſs at a ſtroke; but it was a ſtroke which ſeverely wounded the cauſe it was meant to ſerve. By taking away man's

free agency, an end was at once put to the morality and immorality of human actions; for a being, whose conduct is determined by an over-ruling power, cannot be an accountable one. Thus a corrupt doctrine made way for a species of *fatalism*, which, under an imposing title, tends to deprive rational Christianity of its firmest support.

But, thank GOD, the bible is before me. The word *election* is in it, it is true; but as I would not be governed by the sound of a word, but by its relative signification, I examine the passages where it is to be met with; and am thereby satisfied, that it does not mean the *personal election* of individuals to eternal life, but the *election of nations* to the blessings and privileges of the Gospel dispensation. Where it is said, "JACOB have I loved, and ESAU have I hated;" it only means, (as I trust it is generally understood) that GOD preferred JACOB to ESAU, to inherit and convey the blessing which had been pronounced to faithful ABRAHAM. And nothing but a vain desire to force texts of scripture into the support of an ill-founded scheme of a *particular election and reprobation* to eternal life and eternal misery, could induce any one to press the instance of JACOB and ESAU into their service.*

* See Note at the end of this Discourse.

With reſpect to *abſolute decrees*, determining the future ſalvation of individuals, I ſee nothing in ſcripture that leads me to conclude that there are any ſuch; on the contrary, I ſee all through the bible *general* promiſes of mercy ſuſpended upon *particular conditions*.

On the ſuppoſition, then, that any decrees may have been eſtabliſhed in the Divine councils, (a ſubject on which I preſume not to pronounce) my comfort is, that they muſt be conformable to GOD's revealed will; becauſe a GOD of truth cannot contradict himſelf. Without perplexing myſelf, therefore, with an uſeleſs enquiry with reſpect to what GOD may do by an abſolute act of power, I conſider what He hath done, and what ſtands with his wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs to do. And ſeeing myſelf called upon by his Apoſtle to make my calling and election ſure, I conclude, as I conceive every reaſonable man muſt do, that there can be no abſolute decree in a caſe, the certainty of which depends in ſome meaſure upon myſelf. Confining myſelf, conſequently, to the revealed will of GOD, which was given for my inſtruction in righteouſneſs, and by which I am to be judged; my ſole endeavour is, by Divine grace, to conform myſelf to it; being well aſſured, from the

general tenour of ſcripture, that no *ſanctified* perſon will be ſhut out of heaven, and no *unſanctified* one admitted into it: "for without holineſs no man "ſhall ſee the LORD."

And happy is that meekneſs and poverty of ſpirit, which induſtriouſly declines the rugged thorny paths of controverſy and captious diſpute, and walks in the plain ſmooth way of duty and practical religion; which ſtudies GOD's commands, and labours to underſtand things of a ſize with its capacity. Too many inſtances there are of daring men, who, by preſuming to ſound the deep things of religion, have cavilled and argued themſelves out of all religion. Theſe men miſtake their buſineſs. For what CHRIST requires of thoſe who profeſs his religion is, not penetration or ſubtlety of wit; nice diſtinctions, or ſublime notions; but victorious faith, and an honeſt holy life; ſobriety, temperance, and chaſtity; juſtice and charity, piety and devotion. Let the Chriſtian ſubmit his reaſon to revelation, and let humility and deference to GOD recommend his faith; and then, though there may be knowledge too wonderful for him, and ſo high that he cannot attain unto it, yet he will be ſure not to want any that is neceſſary or profitable for him.

☞ "JACOB have I loved, but ESAU have I hated." Rom. ix. 13. The Apoſtle quotes the foregoing text from the prophet MALACHI, cap. i. 2, 3. By attending to the context it will plainly appear, that what has been haſtily concluded from it, reſpecting the perſonal election of one party, and the perſonal reprobation of the other, was not the idea meant to be conveyed by the prophet. "I loved JACOB," ſaith the LORD, "and I hated ESAU." The account of the manner in which this divine love and hatred were manifeſted is immediately ſubjoined. "I loved JACOB, and I hated ESAU; and laid his mountains and his heritage waſte, for the dragons of the wilderneſs. Whereas EDOM ſaith, we are impoveriſhed, but we will return and build the deſolate places. Thus ſaith the LORD of Hoſts; they ſhall build, but I will pull down; and they ſhall call them the border of wickedneſs, and the people againſt whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. And your eyes ſhall ſee, and ye ſhall ſay, the LORD will be magnified from the border of Iſrael." The latter words in the foregoing paſſage refer to the circumſtance of the MESSIAH being to come from JACOB, and not from ESAU. In which reſpect JACOB is ſaid to be loved, and ESAU to be hated; that is, the line of JACOB was preferred by GOD to that of ESAU for the conveyance of the bleſſing promiſed to ABRAHAM. The promiſe to ABRAHAM was, that "in his ſeed all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed." But it was no part of this promiſe, that the bleſſing ſhould be conveyed through the elder branch of his family; and it could paſs only through one branch of it; it remained, therefore, with GOD to chooſe which branch he thought proper. According to his will, then, the bleſſing of the promiſed ſeed paſſed through ISAAC, not through

ISHMAEL; through JACOB, and not through ESAU; through JUDAH, not through either of the other ſons of JACOB; and through DAVID, in preference to his elder brethren.

With a view to the preference given upon this occaſion, ISAAC, JACOB, JUDAH, and DAVID may be ſaid, in the ſtrong language of ſcripture, to have been *loved of* GOD; that is, preferred by Him; whilſt ISHMAEL, ESAU, and the brethren of JUDAH and DAVID, were *hated* or *rejected*. In the ſame ſenſe the Virgin MARY may be ſaid to have *been loved by* GOD, and all other women in the world hated; becauſe ſhe was choſen or preferred, before all other women, to be the mother of the promiſed MESSIAH.

The expreſſions, therefore, of *loving* and *hating*, as applied to JACOB and ESAU, are to be taken in the ſenſe in which our SAVIOUR uſed the latter, when he ſaid, that "if any man came to him, and *hated* not his father and mother, &c. he could not be his diſciple." LUKE xiv. 26. That is, he that preferred his father and mother, &c. before him, and was not willing to ſacrifice every worldly conſideration, rather than renounce him, was not worthy to be his diſciple.

And that this text, quoted from the Prophet, referred not to the perſonal condition of the parties mentioned in it, but to that of their reſpective poſterities, the argument of the Apoſtle furniſhes a proof. "For the children," ESAU and JACOB, ſays he, "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpoſe of GOD, according to election, might ſtand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was ſaid, the elder ſhall ſerve the younger." Rom. ix. 11. But ESAU the elder, as appears from the hiſtory, never did ſerve JACOB. *Perſonally*, JACOB ſeems ever to have been the inferior. The word of the LORD, therefore, in this remarkable paſſage, not being verified in the perſons of ESAU and JACOB, the accompliſhment of it muſt be referred to their poſterity; and upon this head no doubt can be entertained

by any one who reads the whole paſſage as it ſtands, Gen. xxv, 23: "And the LORD ſaid unto REBEKAH," as ſhe was upon the point of being delivered of the two ſons in queſtion, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people ſhall be ſeparated from thy bowels; and the one people ſhall be ſtronger than the other people; and the elder ſhall ſerve the younger."

This circumſtance of the *elder ſerving the younger* not having then taken place in the perſons of ESAU and JACOB, we muſt look for ſome ſpiritual ſenſe, in order to perceive the completion of this bleſſing to JACOB; and this will lead us to that perſon promiſed to ABRAHAM and to ISAAC, as the bleſſing of all nations, even JESUS CHRIST.

The original promiſe to ABRAHAM implied, that all nations of the earth ſhould have an equal right in the bleſſing of the MESSIAH; yet the church of GOD, of which the MESSIAH is head and king, was for a time confined to the deſcendants of JACOB. In this ſtate of the church, did the poſterity of ESAU ſerve, or was inferior to, that of JACOB. At length the diſtinction was taken away. The church of GOD was opened to all nations, and Gentiles as well as Jews became the people of GOD. Then did ESAU the Gentile break the yoke of JACOB the Jew from off his neck, and became his equal.

An attention to the Apoſtle's argument will convince the reader, that it was St. PAUL's object on the occaſion, not to ſupport the doctrine of predeſtination, or the perſonal election of individuals to the Divine favour; but to reconcile the Jews, to whom it was addreſſed, to the Divine diſpenſation in the promulgation of the Goſpel.

The Goſpel was to be firſt preached to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael; and upon their rejection of it, to the Gentiles. "It was neceſſary" (ſaid the Apoſtles to the Jews) "that the word of GOD ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to you; but ſeeing ye put it from you, and judge yourſelves unworthy

of everlaſting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles: for ſo hath the LORD commanded us." Acts xiii. 46, 47.

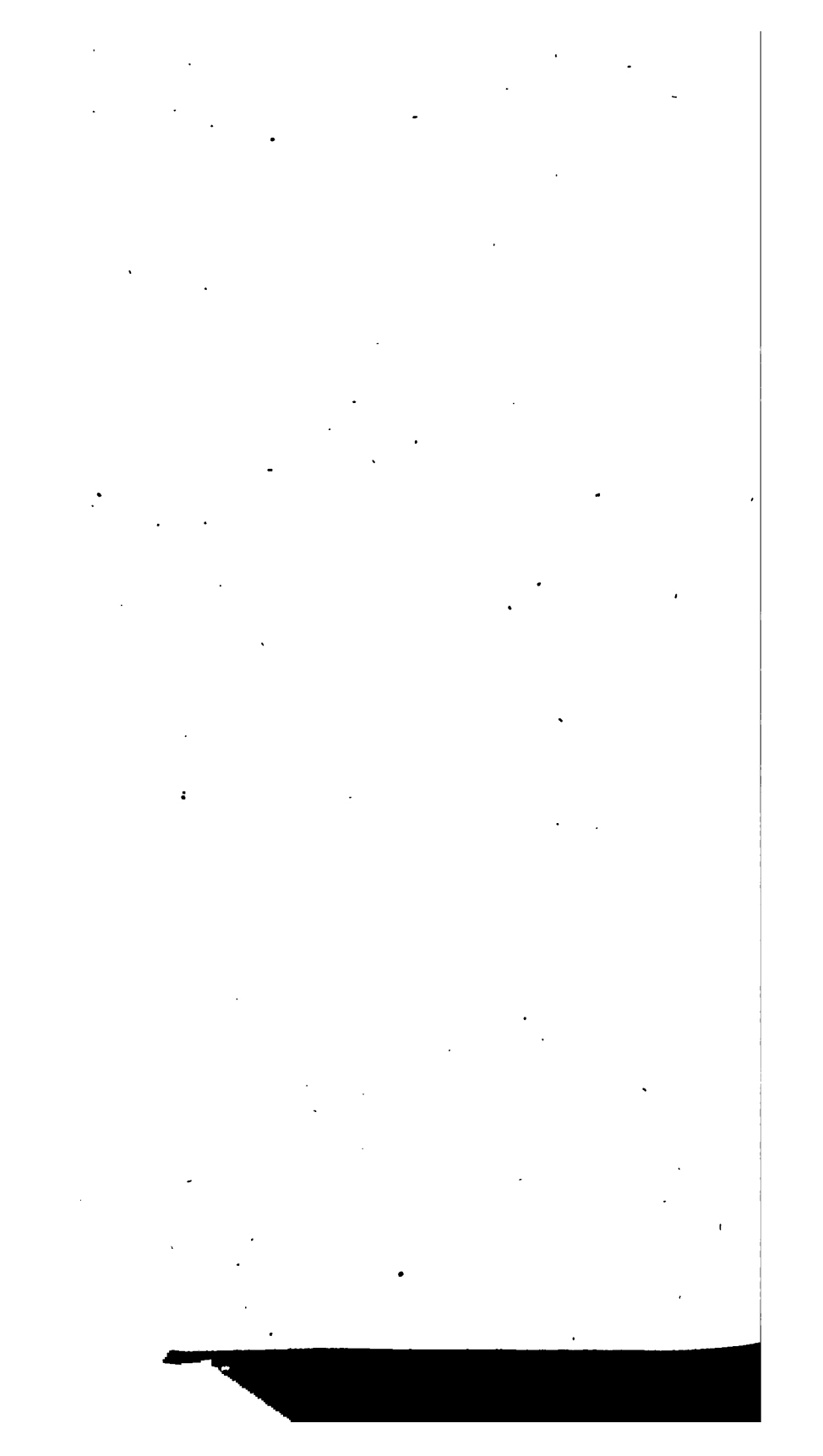
The Jews, the peculiar people of GOD, were at this time to loſe that diſtinction. The middle wall of partition, which heretofore ſeparated the Jewiſh from the Gentile worſhipper in the temple, is therefore ſaid, by the Apoſtle, to have been broken down by CHRIST; that both Jew and Gentile might thereby underſtand, that they were now to be admitted into the church upon the ſame footing; the object of JESUS CHRIST's coming into the world being, "that he might reconcile both unto GOD in one body by the croſs." Epheſ. ii. 16. In alluſion to this part of the Divine diſpenſation reſpecting the admiſſion of the Gentiles into the church, the Apoſtle refers to the prophet HOSEA, where he ſays in the name of the LORD; "I will call them my people, which were not my people, and her *beloved*, which was not *beloved*. And it ſhall come to paſs, that in the place where it was ſaid unto them, Ye are not my people; there ſhall they be called, The children of the living GOD." Rom. ix. 25, 26.

This circumſtance reſpecting the admiſſion of the Gentiles into the Chriſtian church proved a great ſtumbling-block in the way of the Jews, at the firſt preaching the goſpel. To reconcile them to it, the Apoſtle tells them, they might as well aſk, why GOD at firſt choſe the Jews to be his elect and peculiar people; to which no reaſon was to be given, but that it was his will ſo to do. "I will have mercy (ſays GOD) on whom I will have mercy." In like manner they might aſk, why GOD choſe that the MESSIAH ſhould deſcend from the line of JACOB, in preference to that of ESAU; to which a ſimilar anſwer was to be given; It was GOD's will that ſo it ſhould be. In this caſe, of preferring one nation before another, the Creator of man hath exerciſed the ſame power which the potter exerciſes over the clay of the ſame lump, to make one veſſel unto honour, and another unto diſhonour; and the

thing formed is not to ſay to him that formed it, Why haſt thou made me thus?

Taken in this ſenſe then, not as referring to the *perſonal* election of individuals to Divine favour in excluſion of others, but to the election of *nations* to particular and temporary privileges, for the purpoſe of carrying into effect the great myſtery of godliness for the *more general benefit* of mankind, the argument here made uſe of by the Apoſtle is plain, regular, and conſiſtent: and to preſs an argument beyond the ſubject to which it was originally applied, is to take the way moſt likely to lead into error.

[The Reader will ſee this ſubject more largely, and, I flatter myſelf, more concluſively treated, in the Fourth Letter of the Appendix.]



DISCOURSE VI.

On the SACRAMENT *of* BAPTISM, *considered as furnishing a Plea for Separation from the Church.*

TO the two pleas already advanced, a third is to be added, reſpecting the SACRAMENT of BAPTISM; which, as it is adminiſtered in the church, is by ſome maintained to be invalid, for the following reaſons: Firſt, becauſe children are incapable of being ſubjects of it; and ſecondly, becauſe, after the example of our SAVIOUR, who was baptized in Jordan, it ought to be adminiſtered by the immerſion of grown perſons in a river. Did this plea ſtand upon firm ground, it ought, as relating to an eſſential ſervice of the church, to have weight; but ſtanding as it does, according to our ideas, on no foundation, it can, in our judgment, have no weight at all. But as this conſtitutes one of the maſter-prejudices againſt the church, it may be proper to give it ſome conſideration.

The ground upon which the firſt part of this plea ſtands, reſpects the incapacity of children to fulfil the conditions of the baptiſmal covenant.

But this argument, if it prove any thing in the caſe, proves too much. For if no perſons are to be baptized who are incapable of fulfilling the conditions of baptiſm, our SAVIOUR himſelf was, of all others, the moſt incapable of baptiſm.

The baptiſm of JOHN was a *baptiſm unto repentance.* "He came (we read) preaching the baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins." But our bleſſed SAVIOUR had no ſins to repent of. He was "the Lamb of GOD *without ſpot.*" On this account we find JOHN refuſing to baptize our SAVIOUR, conſidering him an improper ſubject for the ordinance. "I have need to be baptized of thee, (ſays the baptiſt) and comeſt thou to me;" But our SAVIOUR, by his anſwer, convinced him, that though he had no ſins to repent of, yet *ſome other end* was to be anſwered by his being baptized. "Suffer it to be ſo now, (ſays CHRIST) for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteouſneſs." Matt. iii. 15.

In like manner infants, though incapable of ſome of the ends of baptiſm, are not incapable of all. They cannot, it is true, make profeſſion either of

their faith or repentance; becauſe they cannot underſtand what is meant by the one, nor are they in want of the other; having no actual ſins to repent of. But, as infants, they are capable of receiving a ſign of GOD's grace and favour. They are capable, for inſtance, of being admitted into the communion of the Chriſtian church, and of having the privileges of the Goſpel covenant conſigned to them; although they are too young to underſtand the nature of that covenant, or perform the duties enjoined upon its members. In a word, they are capable of being waſhed from their original corruption, and of receiving the ſign of their reſtoration to GOD's grace; though they may not at the time be capable of underſtanding the condition upon which it is ſuſpended.

And if GOD has been pleaſed to regard the offſpring of believing parents as holy from their birth, (as the Apoſtle hath plainly told us, 1 Cor. vii. 12) and thereby given them a preſent intereſt in, and ſort of hereditary right to, thoſe means which CHRIST appointed for the ſanctification of his church; ought we not rather to rejoice, that GOD's covenant of mercy to man is beſtowed with a latitude extending to perſons of all ages, than ſeek to ſet limits to Divine goodneſs, by reſtraining it within the narrow

bounds of our own uncharitable prejudices? If CHRIST was pleaſed to leave the door of his church, which was open to children under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, ſtill open to them under the Chriſtian; as he gave his diſciples to underſtand, by telling them to "ſuffer little children to come to him, for of ſuch was the kingdom of GOD;" (or, as the meaning may be better expreſſed, for *theirs is the kingdom of* GOD, or the kingdom of GOD *belongs to them;)* it ſeems an unaccountable infatuation, that parents, who in all other caſes fail not to manifeſt a zeal for the maintenance of their children's privileges, ſhould in this be ſo ready to give them up.

I would aſk ſuch parents a queſtion—Do they think that their children, dying unbaptized, are capable of admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven? Relying on the mercy of GOD, (though *uncovenanted* mercy is all upon which they can, in this inſtance, place any juſt dependence) they will doubtleſs anſwer, *Yes.*

But perſons who are capable of the *greater*, are certainly capable of the *leſs*, which is contained within it. If through Divine mercy, then, unbaptized children are capable of admiſſion into the kingdom of GOD in heaven, they are ſurely capable, through the ſame mercy, of admiſſion into the

church, which is the *kingdom of* GOD *on earth*. If they are capable of receiving the fulneſs of Divine mercy in the poſſeſſion of everlaſting bleſſedneſs in heaven; where CHRIST has told us, "their angels continually behold his Father's face," (Matth. xviii.) they are ſurely capable of being admitted into that church memberſhip, which was deſigned only as preparatory to it.

Although infants, therefore, ſhould not ſuffer for the negligence, obſtinacy, or ſelf-opinion, of their parents; yet parents would do well to conſider what may be the conſequence to themſelves, for ſhewing leſs attention to the ſpiritual condition of their children, than GOD has done; by ſtraitening that covenant, which, in the original delivery of it, was expreſsly extended to them; and, in the Jewiſh church, ſcrupulouſly continued to them. At the ſame time they may remember, that though the child of Moſes ſuffered no puniſhment for the delay of his circumciſion, yet the father (as we read Exodus iv. 24) very narrowly eſcaped it on a memorable occaſion.

But it may be obſerved further, in anſwer to thoſe who object to the admiſſion of infants to baptiſm on account of *incapacity*, that the Jewiſh infants were admitted into the covenant by circumciſion at eight

days old, by GOD's expreſs command. That there is the ſame reaſon for infants of Chriſtian parents to be admitted to baptiſm, is to be thus proved.

The covenant entered into by GOD with ABRAHAM (an account of which we have in the ſeventeenth chapter of Geneſis) was, as ST. PAUL plainly tells us in the third chapter of Galatians, the *Goſpel covenant*. "The ſcripture, (ſays the Apoſtle) foreſeeing that GOD would juſtify the heathen through faith, preached before the *Goſpel to Abraham*," delivered beforehand the glad-tidings of that event to ABRAHAM in the following words: "In thee ſhall all the nations of the earth be bleſſed." "Now to ABRAHAM and his ſeed were the promiſes made. He ſaith not, And to ſeeds, as of many; but as of one: And to thy ſeed, which is CHRIST. This I ſay, that the covenant that was confirmed before of GOD in CHRIST; the law which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot diſannul, that it ſhould make the promiſe of none effect." "From theſe words, which diſtinguiſh ſo plainly between the covenant which GOD made with ABRAHAM, or the promiſe which he made unto him, and the law; it is evident, that the beginning of the Jewiſh church, purely conſidered as a church, is to be dated from

the covenant which GOD made with ABRAHAM; and therefore, in the ſecond place, the way to find out the nature of the Abrahamical or pure Jewiſh church, is to conſider the nature of the covenant or promiſe upon which it was founded; and if we examine the ſcriptures, we ſhall find, that it was an *Evangelical* covenant, for ſubſtance the ſame with that which is ſince made betwixt GOD and us, thro' CHRIST. This will appear upon a review of thoſe ſcriptures which teach us, That *faith* was the condition of this *Abrahamical* covenant; that it was made with ABRAHAM,* as the father of the faithful, and in him with *all believers*, with his *ſpiritual* as well as carnal ſeed, proceeding from him by *ſpiritual* as well as carnal generation; and that the bleſſings or promiſes of this covenant belonged unto them upon the ſame account of their faith."‖

* "Fide autem ſtare juſtitiam, et illic eſſe vitam predictum eſt apud HABAKKUC. *Juſtus autem ex fide vivet.* Inde ABRAHAM *Pater Gentium* credidit. In Genes. credidit ABRAHAM DEO, et deputatum eſt ei ad juſtitiam. Cognoſcitis ergo qui *ex fide* ſunt, hi ſunt filii ABRAHÆ, providens ſcriptura quia *ex fide*, &c."

CYPRIAN advers. Judæos.

"Succeſſiſſe verò in *eorum* locum Chriſtianos *fide* Dominum promerentes, et de *omnibus gentibus, ac toto orbe venientes.*"

CYPRIAN ad Quirin. Teſtim. l. iii.

‖ "Caſe of Infant Baptiſm by the Dean of Worceſter." See London Caſes, No. 15.

The covenant, then, that was made by GOD with ABRAHAM, was the *Goſpel covenant*, containing the promiſe of bleſſing to all nations in CHRIST. Of admiſſion into this covenant *circumciſion* was, at that time, the appointed ſeal. *Circumciſion*, therefore, was not a *legal inſtitution*, but the *ſeal* of the *Goſpel covenant*, adminiſtered to ABRAHAM four hundred and thirty years before the introduction of the law. Agreeably to which our SAVIOUR told the Jews, that "MOSES gave unto them circumciſion, not becauſe it was of MOSES, but of the fathers."

All the alteration that took place in this buſineſs, upon our SAVIOUR's eſtabliſhment of his church, was in the nature of the ſeal of the covenant; our SAVIOUR having exchanged the ſevere and painful one of *circumciſion*, for the more mild and practicable one of *baptiſm*. The *ſeal*, then, is altered, but the *covenant* remains the *ſame*.

The covenant, therefore, into which Chriſtians are admitted by baptiſm, being the ſame *Goſpel covenant*, which was confirmed before to ABRAHAM in CHRIST; the mere change in the ritual can make no difference with reſpect to the capability of the parties to be admitted into it. Conſequently the precept delivered to ABRAHAM, (Gen. x. 17) re-

ſpecting the admiſſion of infants into the Goſpel covenant by *circumciſion*, applies with equal force to the admiſſion of infants into it by *baptiſm; circumciſion* and *baptiſm* being ſeals or tokens of the ſame covenant, appointed by GOD to be made uſe of for the ſame purpoſe, at different periods. Hence it comes to paſs, that the Church Chriſtian is called in the New Teſtament, the *new and supernal Jeruſalem;* to let us know that Chriſtianity is nothing but *ſpiritual Judaism;* the ſame city new reformed, conſtituted upon a new charter, bleſſed with more noble and ample privileges than formerly, and every way better built, and more auguſt than it was. Thus in Rev. iii. 12, "Unto him that overcometh (ſaith the Son of Man) I will write the name of my GOD, and the name of the city of my GOD, which is *new Jeruſalem*, which is come out of heaven from my GOD;" that is, I will acknowledge him that holds out to the end for a perſon truly godly, and for a true member of the pure Catholic-Chriſtian church, which is the ſpiritual Jeruſalem deſcended from above. And ſo, c. xxi. 2, "I ſaw the holy city (New Jeruſalem) coming down from GOD, down out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her huſband," meaning JESUS CHRIST. So, in Gal. iv. "Jeruſalem,

which is from above, is a *free* city, which is the mother of us all."*

To what has been ſaid, it need only be added, (for I avoid entering at large into a ſubject which has been ſo frequently and fully handled) that our SAVIOUR found the Jews in the practice of infant baptiſm; as has, I think, upon the ground of the ſtrongeſt probability, been maintained by learned men. He, therefore, only transferred this ceremony from the Jewiſh church to his own, by making it the ſacrament of initiation into it. It is to be concluded therefore, that the Apoſtles, who were Jews themſelves, and who were directed to addreſs the firſt offer of the Goſpel to "the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael;" in baptizing them into the church of CHRIST, or rather into the new diſpenſation of it, would obſerve the general practice to which they had been accuſtomed, if they had received no expreſs precept from CHRIST to direct them otherwiſe.

But the commiſſion delivered to them by CHRIST was of a moſt general and comprehenſive nature:— "Go ye, and baptize all nations." In conſequence of which commiſſion, we read of their baptizing

* See "Caſe of Infant Baptiſm, by the Dean of Worceſter." London Caſes.

whole houſes, without any exception being made to any perſons contained in them. If our SAVIOUR had not deſigned that baptiſm ſhould be adminiſtered to infants, the commiſſion to his Apoſtles would certainly have been accompanied with an expreſs prohibition to that effect, to prevent their falling into ſo obvious a miſtake. No ſuch prohibition appearing, is a circumſtance that, in reaſonable conſtruction, amounts to a confirmation of the practice then in uſe. For a rule that has once regularly obtained, if unrepealed, ſtill remains in force. This is the argument made uſe of upon this ſubject by one of the moſt learned writers* of our church, and it appears to be unanſwerable: "If baptiſm and the baptizing of infants had been a new thing, and unheard of until JOHN Baptiſt came, as circumciſion was, until GOD appointed it to ABRAHAM; there would have been, no doubt, an expreſs command for baptizing infants, as there was for circumciſing them." But, "ſince it was ordinary in all ages to have infants baptized, if CHRIST would have had that cuſtom aboliſhed, he would have expreſsly forbidden it. So that his and the ſcriptures' ſilence in this matter does confirm and eſtabliſh infant baptiſm for ever."

* LIGHTFOOT.

To the ſecond part of the plea reſpecting the baptiſm of CHRIST in the river Jordan, conſidered as eſtabliſhing a precedent for the practice of a ſimilar form of admiſſion into the Chriſtian church, we have the following anſwer to make; though the ſubject itſelf is almoſt too ridiculous to be entitled to ſerious diſcuſſion.

Our SAVIOUR, we read, was baptized by JOHN in the river Jordan. But the concluſion drawn from thence, reſpecting the form of adminiſtering *Chriſtian baptiſm*, does not appear by any means warranted by the premiſes.

The baptiſm of JOHN was a peculiar miniſtration, preparatory to the eſtabliſhment of CHRIST's church; but did not actually admit into it, or convey the privileges of it. For which reaſon, we find ST. PAUL baptizing ſome diſciples of JOHN, whom he found at Epheſus, *a ſecond time*, in the name of the LORD JESUS: Acts xix. The baptiſm of JOHN, then, and the baptiſm appointed by JESUS CHRIST, being two different ordinances, in uſe at different times, and for different purpoſes; it does not appear that the one, as to the exact form of its adminiſtration, ſhould neceſſarily conſtitute a precedent for the other.

The diſciples of CHRIST and JOHN lived under a different œconomy, and were ſubjected to different rules; a circumſtance which occaſionally gave offence to thoſe who underſtood not the nature of our SAVIOUR's miſſion. In this temper of mind, the diſciples of JOHN came to JESUS to know the reaſon, "why the diſciples of JOHN and of the Phariſees faſted oft, whilſt his diſciples faſted not." But what was a rule in the one caſe, did not become obligatory in the other; the parties to whom it was applied being differently circumſtanced.

CHRIST, it muſt be conſidered then, baptized men to be his own diſciples, not to be the diſciples of JOHN: and his baptiſm was the baptiſm of admiſſion into the Chriſtian church; whilſt that of JOHN was only a baptiſm of diſcipleſhip into his own peculiar miniſtry. Allowing, therefore, that all JOHN's diſciples were baptized in a river, (which is more than can be proved, and from the nature of JOHN's miniſtry, as the preacher of the wilderneſs, it is probable that he made uſe of water in any place where it was convenient for his purpoſe;) it does not follow from this circumſtance, that the diſciples of CHRIST ſhould be baptized in a river alſo; CHRIST having no where ordained that they ſhould be: and reaſon

forbids us to conclude, that the quantity of water made uſe of in this ſacrament, any more than the quantity of bread and wine conſumed in that of the LORD'S Supper, can be eſſential to the validity of the inſtitution.

When PETER, ignorant of the ſpiritual nature of CHRIST'S waſhing, required him not only to waſh his feet, but alſo his hands and his head, judging that a partial waſhing could not effect a general cleanſing, our SAVIOUR'S anſwer was calculated to rebuke his carnal application of the act, by telling him, that "he that is waſhed, needeth not ſave to waſh his feet, but is clean every whit." JOHN xiii. 10. PETER therefore was given to underſtand, that the effect produced in this caſe, was not by the outward application of the element of water, becauſe parts were ſaid to be cleanſed which the water had not touched; but by the operation of the ſpirit on the ſoul, producing that inward purity, of which an idea was conveyed to the mind by this familiar application to the body. Thus, in like manner, the effect of waſhing in baptiſm is not produced by the water applied to the body, either in whole or in part; but by the ſpirit of GOD accompanying an ordinance of his own inſtitution, and producing that effect upon

the ſoul of the party, of which the water is deſigned to be the type or emblem.

But it is to be further obſerved, that the circumſtance now reckoned by ſome few individuals ſo *eſſential* to baptiſm, from the conſideration of CHRIST's having been baptized in a river, was, in the primitive church, either not regarded at all, or at leaſt deemed a matter of indifference. For though the form of plunging the whole body was in general obſerved, as moſt ſignificant of the idea meant to be conveyed on the occaſion; nevertheleſs this was done, not in a river, but in a *baptiſtry*, or building adjoining to their churches; where every thing was prepared for the decent adminiſtration of this ſervice.

It is moreover well known not to have been an uncommon thing among the early Chriſtians, to defer their baptiſm till they were ſuppoſed to be on their death-beds; upon the idea of guarding thereby againſt the probability of falling away from grace; in which caſes, the form of plunging the party either in a river or elſewhere muſt, it is preſumed, have been diſpenſed with. And in the caſe of the gaoler's family who were baptized in the priſon, there is reaſon to think that the Apoſtle made uſe of ſtill more diſcretionary latitude in the performance of this office;

from the conſideration that there could be no river to be made uſe of on this occaſion; together with the improbability that the gaoler's houſe ſhould be provided with conveniences for the immerſion of the whole body. For, according to the account given of this tranſaction, we find that it was a buſineſs of immediate diſpatch; no time being given for preparation on the ſubject. Immediately upon the diſcovery of the ſituation of his priſoners, the gaoler (we read) "took them *the ſame hour of the night*, and waſhed their ſtripes, and was baptized, he and all his, *ſtraitway*." Acts xvi. 33.

And allowing, what might have been the caſe, that the gaoler's houſe was provided with a fountain, in which he and his family might have been baptized by immerſion; yet this fountain not being a river, a deviation from the ſuppoſed eſtabliſhed practice of baptiſm in one point, as circumſtances then required, renders the imitation of our SAVIOUR's example, as to the letter, not *eſſential* to this ſervice.

From theſe premiſes, we feel ourſelves warranted in concluding, that the baptiſm of JOHN in the river Jordan conſtitutes no precedent for the baptiſm of Chriſtians; and from the circumſtance, that baptizing in a river, conſidered as the neceſſary form of admiſſion

into the Chriſtian church, has neither the authority of ſcripture, antiquity, or reaſon for its ſupport, it conſequently follows, that the example of CHRIST, in this caſe, was not meant to apply to his diſciples.

But there is another and ſtill more eſſential conſideration belonging to this ſubject, which it is my duty to place before you.

Baptiſm is the ſeal of a covenant; a pledge, to aſſure the parties to whom it is applied, of the performance of thoſe conditions, by which a gracious GOD has been pleaſed to bind himſelf to man. The affixing this ſeal GOD has made the peculiar office of his appointed miniſters.

Now we know, that in all human covenants the ſize or ſhape of the ſeal, whether it be large or ſmall, round or ſquare, is a matter of no importance; the validity of it depending ſolely upon the character of the perſon who makes the impreſſion. In a caſe where the affixing the ſeal is not the perſonal act of the contracting party, ſhould the perſon who undertakes to do it, not be authorized to repreſent that party, the ſignature becomes ineffectual; and the covenant into which this ſelf-appointed repreſentative has preſumed to enter, of courſe not binding. Apply this to the ſubject of baptiſm, and the concluſion, it is preſumed, will

be, that it is not a matter of ſo much conſequence, *where* baptiſm is adminiſtered, as by *whom;* and that the baptiſm in the church is valid, not on account of the particular form in which it is adminiſtered, but becauſe thoſe who adminiſter it, have received a commiſſion to bind the contracting party; and that the baptiſm out of the church, whether the ſervice be performed in a river or elſewhere, is not ſo, for the oppoſite reaſon.

Much more might be ſaid, and has been ſaid upon this ſubject at different times; though, alas! with little effect; becauſe men wedded to an opinion, however ill-founded, are ſeldom in a diſpoſition to be convinced; the beſt arguments appearing weak and unſatisfactory, when oppoſed to inveterate prejudices.

Indeed, when I conſider the liberal nature of the Goſpel covenant, the general tenour of the Apoſtolic commiſſion, and the univerſal practice of the primitive church conſequent thereupon, I cannot tell where to find ground for a diſpute upon this ſubject. But when I conſider the nature of man, together with the many abſurdities which have at different times found their ſtrenuous advocates in the church; I am ſurpriſed at no concluſion that may be drawn by a being, who, as the world now goes, claims a right of

judging *abſolutely* for himſelf in all religious matters: becauſe zeal being a much more common thing than knowledge, it muſt often happen, even upon the moſt charitable conſtruction, that ſincerity and error will be ſo intimately blended together, that juſtly to diſcriminate between them will ſurpaſs the common powers of the human mind.*

* A learned and elaborate inveſtigation of this general ſubject, the reader will find in "the Hiſtory of Infant Baptiſm," by the Rev. W. Wall. For the manner in which this ſubject, as applicable to our preſent purpoſe has been handled in the foregoing Chapter, the reader will find abundant authority in "the Caſe of Infant Baptiſm" above referred to; written by that moſt learned divine and ornament of the Church of England, the Rev. G. Hickes, D.D.

DISCOURSE VII.

On LIBERTY *of* CONSCIENCE.

TO the pleas already advanced in juſtification of ſeparation from the church, may be added thoſe general ones which reſpect the hacknied ſubjects of *liberty of conſcience*, *toleration*, and *the right of private judgment* in religious matters; upon each of which it may be neceſſary to ſay a few words: becauſe vulgar errors of ſome magnitude have been attached to theſe popular phraſes, which have led many well-meaning people to dangerous concluſions. And the hiſtory of this country in particular proves, that it is a matter of importance to prevent people from running away with words; becauſe there is a certain unaccountable magick in the ſound of ſome words, which operates beyond what can be reaſonably accounted for: the ill effect of which, upon minds unqualified to diſcriminate, it is always difficult, ſometimes impoſſible, to counteract.

In fact, the generality of mankind are governed by *words* and *names*; often without, and ſometimes even againſt their knowledge. Whilſt the ignorant multitude are led backward and forward, this way and that way, like a drove of cattle, by the cry to which their drivers have familiariſed them. This has been the caſe from the beginning of the world to the preſent day; and muſt be the caſe, ſo long as men continue to be what they are, more diſpoſed to *act* than to *think*.

But words, it is to be obſerved, are but the garments of things; and ſometimes looſe garments, which are put off and on, according to the taſte or humour of their employer. At the ſame time it ſhould be remembered, that how often ſoever the dreſs may change, the body ſtill remains the ſame: in other words, there is a character of truth eſſential to the nature of certain ſubjects, which, though by an artful diſguiſe it may be made to ſerve the cauſe of impoſture, will not remain unknown to thoſe who have judgment and reſolution to ſtrip off the dreſs deſigned to conceal it.

Nothing would be more eaſy, than to prove the dreadful conſequences derivable to ſociety from ſuch fatal deception, by an induction of thoſe numberleſs circumſtances in which a plauſible word, wreſted from

its proper ſenſe, has proved the means of accompliſhing whatever object the artful employer of it had in view, however deſtructive to the peace and welfare of mankind. But to avoid digreſſion, it will be neceſſary to confine myſelf to what may be conſidered as falling within the compaſs of our preſent ſubject. The only popular phraſes, therefore, upon which I ſhall now hazard a remark, will be thoſe of *liberty of conſcience*, *toleration*, and the *right of private judgment* in religious matters; ſubjects, upon which all ſeparatiſts from the church are forward in enlarging; becauſe they, for the moſt part, conſider them as ſtanding upon ground which is not to be ſhaken.

In ſubjects, where truth and error border ſo cloſe upon each other, that it requires nice diſcrimination to trace out with preciſion the exact line of ſeparation between them; and in which intereſt and prejudice have at all times had much to do, in miſleading the underſtanding, and corrupting the judgment; we muſt not be ſurpriſed to find, not only a great variety of ſentiments and opinions, but alſo a great perplexity in the manner in which they are delivered. When, through the infirmity of human nature, men are apt to be more intent on gaining the victory over an opponent, than on inveſtigating the cauſe of truth;

they will chooſe that field of controverſy, which gives the greateſt ſcope for manœuvring, to prevent as much as may be, the poſſibility of their being puſhed as it were into a corner, from whence there might be no eſcape. In defending their cauſe, therefore, knowing that much is to be ſaid, which is not to be controverted; they take care to confine themſelves to thoſe generalities, to which their opponent cannot object; whilſt their mode of attack conſiſts, for the moſt part, in driving their adverſary into extremes, by a ſtudious aggravation of his concluſions, for the purpoſe of eſtabliſhing a ground-work for popular declamation and abuſe.

By this mode of managing controverſy, the exact point in which truth lies, is continually kept out of ſight; for men, whoſe object it is, in the handling certain ſubjects, not ſo much to convince, as to confound, will ſtudiouſly ſteer clear of thoſe preciſe limits, which ought to conſtitute the boundary for all rational argument on the occaſion. To the ſubjects here immediately in view the foregoing obſervations may not be deemed wholly inapplicable.

Upon the firſt of them, it has been imagined, that, provided men follow the direction of their own *conſciences*, they are juſtified in whatever mode of con-

duct they may adopt; which (as the term conſcience is now too generally underſtood) is in other words to ſay, that becauſe men are perſuaded a thing is *right*, therefore it cannot be *wrong*. Upon this principle, it matters not what a man's profeſſion is, provided he be *ſincere* in it; conſequently the *ſincere* martyr for the faith, and the *ſincere* perſecutor of it, ſtand upon the ſame footing.

But though a conduct, in oppoſition to the dictate of conſcience, carry with it its own condemnation, (for in ſuch a caſe a man pronounces ſentence upon himſelf;) it by no means follows, that a conduct in conformity to it will, on that account, ſecure to itſelf an acquittal. For this would be to make private opinion the ſtandard of right and wrong, inſtead of the law of GOD; an idea which has, on different occaſions, led to an infinity of miſchief.

Though the plea of conſcience, therefore, conſidered as the private judgment of the party upon the legality or illegality of his own conduct, might be a good one in the mouth of a heathen, who might have no ſurer guide to follow; yet it cannot be admitted in that of a Chriſtian, but in proportion as it is conformable to the rule by which it will be judged But, as preparatory to our forming a correct idea upon

this ſubject, it is neceſſary that we know what *conſcience properly is*; for of the number that make uſe of the word, nineteen in twenty, perhaps, may be ignorant of its true meaning.

By *conſcience*, then, is to be underſtood, not that knowledge, opinion, or perſuaſion, which a man may poſſeſs upon any given ſubject; but that knowledge, opinion, or perſuaſion, which is reflected inward upon his mind from ſome *reaſon*, *law*, or *rule*, *from without*, which is the proper ſtandard of judgment in the caſe in queſtion. Conſcience, therefore, as its compound title denotes is, *comparative knowledge*; it is the judgment which a man paſſes on his own actions compared with ſome law. Remove all law, and you take away all conſcience. For where there is no law, there can be no tranſgreſſion; and where there is no tranſgreſſion, there can be no judgment, becauſe there is no criminal. Without a law ſuperior to conſcience, therefore, there can be no ſuch thing as conſcience at all: for conſcience is a private, perſonal principle, which muſt neceſſarily be ſubmitted to ſome law of GOD, real or ſuppoſed, as its ultimate rule.

"When we ſpeak of conſcience in our actions, (ſays Archbiſhop SHARP) we have reſpect to ſome law or rule, by which thoſe actions are to be directed and

governed, and by their agreeableneſs or diſagreeableneſs with which, they become morally *good* or *evil*.* The law of the Chriſtian, in religious matters, is the revealed will of GOD; and what, upon proper authority, is deducible from it. The *conſcience* of a Chriſtian, conſequently, is that teſtimony which the mind bears to the conduct, when compared with that *revealed will*.

It is in fact the application of the general Chriſtian law to a particular inſtance of practice. Hence it is, that conſcience, as the vicegerent of GOD, carries a divine authority with it, becauſe it has a divine word or precept to ſupport it. But if no ſuch word or precept is to be produced, it may, indeed, be ſtrong opinion or perſuaſion, but it is not conſcience. And no greater miſchief has been done in the world, than from the want of a proper diſtinction having been made between conſcience and mere confidence of opinion, or perſuaſion.

In temporal matters, ſhould a man plead *conſcience*, or it ſhould rather be called *private perſuaſion*, againſt the determination of an exiſting law, he would be told, that he was not at liberty to make a rule for

* See "Diſcourſe concerning Conſcience" by Archbiſhop SHARP, in London Caſes, No. 8.

himſelf different from that which the ſociety, of which he was a member, had made for him; and upon which it was his duty to procure information. Were the caſe otherwiſe, the very end of ſociety would be fruſtrated. For let it be conſidered, what muſt be the conſequence of the admiſſion of that principle, upon which the modern plea of conſcience is too commonly founded; namely, that the private perſuaſion of the party, furniſhes a juſtification for his public conduct.

The Quaker, for inſtance, conſiders the payment of tithe to be unlawful. He therefore reſiſts the demand, upon the hacknied plea of conſcience. But, as it has been already obſerved, nothing can be a rule of conſcience, in religious matters, but ſome law of GOD, real or ſuppoſed. The plain law of GOD calls upon the Quaker, in common with all other members of a civilized community, to "ſubmit himſelf to every ordinance of man for the LORD's ſake;" and the legiſlature of his country has made the payment of tithe legal. Nothing, then, can juſtify an oppoſition to the legiſlature, in this caſe, but a firm conviction in the mind of the party, that the law enacted is in direct contradiction to ſome law of GOD, natural or revealed.

But the law eſtabliſhing the payment of tithe does not ſtand in this predicament; for it muſt be conſidered rather as a law in conformity with the revealed will of GOD, than in contradiction to it. The private perſuaſion of the Quaker, under the impoſing plea of conſcience, may therefore be conſidered as ſet up in oppoſition to the law both of GOD and man; and the admiſſion of it by the legiſlature is but eſtabliſhing a precedent for further oppoſition to its authority.

For let this principle be carried to its length, and it is eaſy to ſee where it muſt terminate. Upon the ground that the Quaker reſiſts the law of tythe, he may take it into his head to reſiſt any other act of the legiſlature; and if his reſiſtance be admitted, if the private perſuaſion of the individual (for conſcience it muſt not be called) be allowed to be pleaded in bar of obedience to an exiſting law, there will ſhortly be an end of all government in the world.

That this ſame plea of conſcience is of equal validity, when made uſe of by Diſſenters of any kind, as a juſtification for their non-conformity tothe liturgy, rites, and ceremonies of our church, is a point that has been abundantly and repeatedly proved.*

* See SOUTH's Sermons on 1 John iii. 21, vol. ii.; and "Diſcourſe of Conſcience" by Archbiſhop SHARP, in London Caſes.

As in temporal matters, then, the law of the land becomes obligatory upon every individual of the community; ſo, in concerns of a ſpiritual nature, the will of GOD, ſo far as it has been revealed, admits of no exemption from its obligation; nor can conſcience be pleaded as a juſtification for diſobedience in either caſe.

If GOD, then, has been pleaſed to appoint a way in which he will be worſhipped; I am no more at liberty, upon the mere ground of my own perſuaſion, to worſhip him in any other way, than I am at liberty to act in contradiction to his revealed will in any other matter. When men, therefore, talk of liberty of conſcience, they would do well to conſider, whether it be not, as the phraſe is now generally underſtood, rather a liberty of their own making, than any portion of that liberty with which CHRIST has made them free.

Indeed, the idea that has for ſome time prevailed among us, that Chriſtian liberty gives every man a right to worſhip GOD in his own way, appears to have been admitted without ſufficient examination. There is not one ſingle paſſage of ſcripture, which ſtrikes me as warranting the concluſion that has been drawn upon this ſubject. Our SAVIOUR ſays,* "he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath

* John xii. 48.

one that judgeth him: the word that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge him in the laſt day." And "though we, or an angel from heaven, (ſaith ST. PAUL) preach any other Goſpel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed." Gal. i. 8.

Suppoſe, now, any man, upon the plea of conſcience, ſhould reject CHRIST, as many, alas! have done; refuſe to acknowledge him in his mediatorial character, and thereby ſet up for himſelf a religion, *eſſentially* different from that which has been revealed; will it be ſaid, that CHRIST has given man a liberty to be thus employed againſt himſelf? "He that is not for me," ſaith CHRIST, "is againſt me; and he that gathereth not with me, ſcattereth."†

It has, indeed, been ſaid, that in a matter which concerns his own ſalvation, every man ſhould be left to the direction of his own judgment.

Provided the revealed will of GOD be made the rule of that judgment, this will be readily granted. But as this poſition is generally underſtood, thoſe who are forward in advancing it, have not duly conſidered, perhaps, to what extent it may be carried; or, what is ſtill more to the purpoſe, whether GOD has,

† Matt. xii. 30.

with reſpect to man's ſpiritual concerns, been pleaſed to leave him thus abſolutely, as it were, in his own hands. If he has not, all reaſoning upon the matter is at an end; and before men ſuffer themſelves to be governed by a ſpecious dogma, which is calculated to impoſe, they ſhould examine, whether they have fairly meaſured their application of it by the ſtandard ſet up for that purpoſe in the word of GOD. In other words, whether they have *honeſtly* made uſe of all means to inform their judgment, before they adopt it as their rule of conduct. If they have not, their ſincerity, merely as ſuch, will furniſh no plea in their favour. They will be condemned, not becauſe they are ſincere, but becauſe they have neglected thoſe means of information, which would have directed their ſincerity to its proper object. In conſequence of which neglect, they may be in the condition of numberleſs aſſertors of the rights of conſcience, that have appeared in all ages of the world; who, in the ſtrenuous exertion of their zeal, thought they were doing GOD ſervice, at the time they were engaged in the moſt direct oppoſition to his will; and ſacrificing to idols which their own corrupt nature had ſet up, under the different ſhapes of *pride*, *prejudice*, and *worldly intereſt*.

DISCOURSE VIII.

On TOLERATION.

THE ſubject of TOLERATION has been open to much miſconception.

The Act upon which it is founded, ſhould be ſeen in a *civil*, not in a *religious* point of view; for it concerns men as members of a civil ſociety, rather than in any other character. The paſſing this Act was a ſeaſonable exertion of political wiſdom, for the purpoſe of ſecuring the government of this country, at a very critical period, upon the broadeſt foundation. And the Act itſelf may with more propriety be called an Act of Suſpenſion, than of Toleration; the purpoſe of it being to ſecure Proteſtant Diſſenters from the Church of England, on certain conditions, from the penalties to which they had been made ſubject by former ſtatutes. That this was the idea which the legiſlators had before them at the time, may be fairly concluded, from the word *Toleration* not being once

mentioned through the whole ſtatute; and from the Act of Uniformity being at the ſame time ſuffered to remain unrepealed.

To form a correct judgment, then, upon this ſubject, it may be proper to conſider every law as compoſed of two diſtinct parts, the *preceptive*, that which binds the law upon the conſcience, and the *coercive*, that which enforces the obligation of it upon the practice. Now the *coercive* part of any law, or the penal ſanction annexed to it, is only for the neceſſary purpoſe of moving or conſtraining men to pay that obedience to the law, which is required of them. But the obligation upon the conſcience is not derived from the penalty deſigned to ſecure it, but from the authority of the lawgiver; who, by virtue of that authority, had a right to exact obedience to all his juſt demands. A ſuſpenſion, therefore, of the penal ſanction, though in the preſent corrupt ſtate of man it render the law leſs effectual, does not in anywiſe invalidate the law itſelf; which remains juſt what it was before the ſanction was annexed to it; binding upon the party, or otherwiſe, according to the juſt tenour of the law in queſtion, and the authority of the law-maker, independent of every other conſideration. For it is not reaſonable

to ſuppoſe, that the removal of the penalty can take away from the law that obligation which it derives from a different cauſe.

The Apoſtle ſeems to have had this idea before him in the following legal comment addreſſed to his diſciples. "Wherefore," ſays he, "you muſt needs be ſubject, not only for *wrath*, but alſo for *conſcience* ſake:" not for fear of the penalty, but from a ſenſe of the obligation which the law binds upon the conſcience. A motive which ought to ſecure the obedience of every Chriſtian.

The ſanction annexed, then, to any law proves nothing as to the obligation of the law itſelf upon the conſcience; but it proves, that in conſequence of man not being in that perfect condition in which he ought to be, other motives, beſides thoſe derived from the reaſonableneſs and equity of the command, are become neceſſary to ſecure his obedience. For every law ſtands upon the ground of its own merits; if good in itſelf, and enacted by proper authority, whether the penalties deſigned to ſecure its operation be enforced or not, its obligation upon the conſcience remains the ſame.

Let us now conſider what the Act of Toleration, as it is commonly called, has done in the caſe before us.

By the Act of *Uniformity*, every perſon is required to conform to the mode of worſhip eſtabliſhed in this country. The enforcement of penalties upon this ſubject, a ſubſequent Act has, under certain circumſtances, ſuſpended; whilſt, at the ſame time, the Act itſelf, the operation of which thoſe penalties were meant to ſecure, is ſuffered to remain in being. May we not conclude from hence, that the legiſlators ſaw no reaſon to alter their opinion with reſpect to the Act of Uniformity itſelf; although, upon conſideration, they thought proper, in particular caſes, to leave it to produce its effect upon the mind, unaſſiſted by its appointed ſanction.

The title of Toleration Act, therefore, which uſe has now familiarized to the ear, ſeems to be derived rather from the meaning which popular interpretation has affixed to the Act in queſtion, than from the real intention of the Act itſelf. For an exemption from penalties, which the policy of former times had inflicted upon certain irregular practices, cannot be conſidered ſo much a toleration of thoſe practices, as an acknowledgment, on the part of Government, that religious opinions, ſo long as they do not interfere with what is deemed to be the welfare of the ſtate, are no longer conſidered objects for temporal coercion.

But in this caſe, as in ſome others, in which the prejudices and paſſions of mankind are deeply engaged, the concluſion has been carried beyond the premiſes; and the legiſlature has been underſtood to ſay more than was ever meant to be ſaid upon this ſubject; the ſetting free from legal reſtraint certain religious diſtinctions and practices having been conſidered, by many, to amount to a juſtification, or even *eſtabliſhment* of them. Whereas the Act of Toleration, as it is called, *tolerates nothing*; if by toleration is to be underſtood a juſtification of practices, againſt which temporal penalties had been heretofore denounced. A ſuſpenſion of thoſe penalties is all that it pretends to. But a ſuſpenſion of penalties, whilſt the law to which they have been annexed continue unrepealed, as it has been already obſerved, does not leſſen the obligation of that law, though it may deſtroy its effect.

But upon the ſuppoſition that the Act of Toleration did more than it does; that it not only ſuſpended the penalties by which a conformity to the eſtabliſhed worſhip was deſigned to be enforced, but that it moreover repealed every civil law that related to that ſubject; ſuch a conceſſion would make no alteration in the caſe before us. For the obligation to church

unity is not derived from the authority of the *civil*, but from that of the *Divine* law. It is originally grounded upon the revealed will of the Founder of the Chriſtian church; who could not give a more ſtriking proof of the neceſſity and importance of this Chriſtian principle, than by making it the ſubject of his moſt ſolemn prayer on a very particular occaſion. Nor could the Apoſtle give a more plain deſcription of the nature of it, than by making the human body a type or emblem of the Chriſtian church; to the end that the members of the latter ſhould draw an argument for their conſtant communion with each other, from the conſideration of the joint fellowſhip and united operation of the members of the former.

Wherever, then, the church of CHRIST exiſts, an obligation to communion with it is binding upon the conſcience of every Chriſtian, by virtue of that Divine law which accompanied its eſtabliſhment. This Divine law is paramount to every human injunction upon the ſubject. Whatever liberty, therefore, the Act of Toleration may be ſuppoſed to give, with reſpect to Chriſtian conformity, muſt be underſtood as given in a caſe, in which *no human legiſlature has any liberty to grant.* The civil penalties which were de-

ſigned to ſecure it, having been removed, the law to which they were annexed is left to ſtand upon the original grounnd of its ſuppoſed agreement with the revealed will of GOD; conſequently, the obligation to church unity is juſt what it was in the primitive days of the church, before civil policy interfered with the buſineſs.

And though in this caſe civil policy, by withdrawing its influence, ceaſe to aſſiſt the operation of the Divine law, it does not, therefore, leſſen its obligation. For by whatever rules of political expediency the conduct of the magiſtrate may be governed, certain it is, that the greater power cannot be overruled by the leſſer one. The ſin of ſchiſm, therefore, or a wilful ſeparation from the church of CHRIST, is juſt what the word of GOD has pronounced it to be, whatever may be the determination of the magiſtrate upon the ſubject; and all that he has hitherto determined upon it in this country, has been to leave it to the judgment of its proper tribunal.

It is to be lamented, indeed, that an indulgence, originating, we truſt, in charity, and deſigned to produce good effects, ſhould have operated to the more general diſunion of the members of the Chriſtian church. But certain it is, that the Act which

ſuſpends the penalties which were deſigned to enforce the obligation to church communion, has, in its operation, tended to increaſe the evil, which the original interference of the legiſlature was in this caſe intended to prevent. That ſanction which the legiſlature has been ſuppoſed (by a miſinterpretation of the Act in queſtion) to give to every ſeparation from the Chriſtian church, has in fact proved the moſt fatal blow that the unity of that church ever received. For, according to the remonſtrance of the Houſe of Commons, in anſwer to CHARLES the Second's declaration from Breda, "it has (in a manner) eſtabliſhed ſchiſm by a law; made the whole government of the church precarious, and the cenſures of it of no moment or conſideration; and been the cauſe of increaſing ſects and ſectaries, by introducing that looſe way of thinking upon the ſubject of church communion, which makes it a matter of indifference with many people, what place of worſhip they frequent, or with what ſociety of religioniſts they are connected: a circumſtance, which annihilates, as it were, the ſin of ſchiſm, by removing out of ſight all thoſe diſcriminating marks, to be found in the writings of the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, by which the

church of CHRIST, as a ſociety at unity within itſelf, is diſtinguiſhed."

Before we finiſh this head, it may be proper to ſay one ſhort word to guard againſt wrong concluſions.

As miniſters of the church of CHRIST upon conviction, we muſt lament, in common with all ſound members of it, that there ſhould be any ſuch thing as ſeparation from it; and it is our duty, ſo far as perſuaſion and argument will go, to prevent it. But knowing that diverſity of opinions in religious matters is the unavoidable reſult of human imperfection and human liberty, and that offences muſt come; we are prepared, in what we conceive to be the true ſpirit of our religion, to accompany ſuch events with that charitable hope which one Chriſtian may beſtow upon another, though of a different opinion. At the ſame time we ſhould do leſs than our duty, did we not clearly point out what has been here attempted, the light in which, according to our judgment, the Act of Toleration ſhould be ſeen by every member of the Chriſtian church; reminding him, that, upon the ſuppoſition that a wilful ſeparation from the church is ſinful in the eyes of GOD, of which, it is preſumed, no reaſonable doubt can

be entertained, no act of any human legiſlature can make it otherwiſe.

Separatiſts from the church, therefore, under the ſuppoſed countenance of Government, would do well to conſider, that a *civil* act in this caſe (as we have above obſerved) reſpects them only as members of a *civil* ſociety; but furniſhes no proper ſtandard of judgment for their conduct as *Chriſtians;* in which character, they become amenable to the law of that LORD, by whom they will be judged, and from whoſe ſentence there lies no appeal.

DISCOURSE IX.

On the Right of PRIVATE JUDGMENT *in Religious Matters.*

UPON the *right of private judgment* in religious matters much more perhaps has been ſaid, than the ſubject will warrant.

The Apoſtle, indeed, directs us to "prove all things," but at the ſame time to "hold faſt that which is good." From whence it may be concluded, that there is a difference between a blind and implicit obedience to authority in religious matters, and a total exemption from obligation on that head; between taking our religion entirely upon truſt from others, or thinking it to be a part of Chriſtian liberty, to make what religion we pleaſe for ourſelves. The one leads back to the dark days of bigotry and ſuperſtition, the other renders the eſtabliſhment of a church, as a ſociety under regular government, altogether impracticable.

In fact, the right of private judgment in religious matters reſpects man in the relation in which he ſtands to his fellow-creatures; the exerciſe of which, ſo far as it concerns himſelf only, no other man has a right to control. But this conſideration, though it tend to ſecure a privilege, claimed by every member of civilized ſociety, muſt nevertheleſs, when applied to the ſubject immediately before us, be meaſured by a ſacred ſtandard, before it can become a ſafe principle of human conduct. The phraſe, therefore, is open to an ambiguous meaning; and calculated, if not to offer incenſe to that idol of the natural man, human reaſon, at leaſt to cheriſh an idea, which has too often led to a dangerous concluſion. Man, in the affairs of this world, may aſſume a right to judge for himſelf in a caſe upon which he is not qualified to form a judgment; and ſo long as his exerciſe of that right interferes not with the authority of the magiſtrate, or the welfare of the community, he may be indulged in his folly. But in religious matters no man can have a right to judge otherwiſe than GOD has judged for him. The ordinances of CHRIST, and the truths of his religion, are neceſſary, becauſe he has made them ſo; that neceſſity therefore muſt continue the ſame, whether

we obſerve them, or not. For the religion of CHRIST, whatever be man's opinion upon it, will be preciſely what it is, "the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever;" and it is at his peril, if he do not conform to it.

To ſay, therefore, that man has a right to worſhip GOD in the way he thinks proper; in other words, to make a religion for himſelf; is to place all religions upon the ſame level as to the Divine favour, and to render an appeal to revelation wholly unneceſſary; by leading him to conclude, that he is at liberty to ſet up a ſtandard of right and wrong for himſelf in this caſe, inſtead of accepting with humility that Divine ſtandard which has in wiſdom been ſet up for him.

To enter more at large into this ſubject, after what has been already ſaid, under the head of Liberty of Conſcience, would be to treſpaſs upon the reader.

It may be neceſſary, however, to take notice of one mode of ſettling the minds of ill-informed people upon this ſubject; which, from its plauſibility, has gained much credit in the world.

There are authors, unhappily for this country, whoſe manner of writing, upon certain ſubjects,

ſeems calculated to confound every thing that looks like order and government in ſociety; by ſetting up the majeſty of the people (to make uſe of the abſurd phraſeology of republicaniſm) as the origin of power in the ſtate; and the ſacred right, or rather miſtaken plea of *Proteſtantiſm*, as a ſanction for diviſions in the church. According to theſe writers, who either do not underſtand, or purpoſely miſrepreſent, the principle of *proteſtantiſm*, the right of judgment in religious matters, which the church of England pleads in juſtification of her ſeceſſion from the church of Rome, is to be pleaded, by every individual Chriſtian, for his ſeparation from the church of England; as if by *proteſtantiſm* were chiefly meant, a right of ſeparation from the church; without regard to the cauſe of it. But upon examining the two caſes, we ſhall find them to be by no means parallel; and conſequently no concluſion is to be drawn from the one to the other.

The ſeparation of the church of England from the church of Rome, was grounded, not upon the idea, that ſhe had a right to form a church for herſelf upon any new plan of her own; but upon the idea, that it was no longer compatible with the ſpiritual welfare of her members to hold communion with a

corrupt church. It was neither the government nor doctrine of the church of CHRIST, that were proteſted againſt on this occaſion, but the corruptions that had taken place in both; the uſurped ſupremacy of the biſhop of Rome, and thoſe dangerous tenets, which were incompatible with ſome of the moſt eſſential articles of the Chriſtian faith. In proteſting againſt the Pope's uſurped ſupremacy, the church of England did no more than the church of Rome herſelf had done upon a former occaſion, when GREGORY the Firſt proteſted againſt the uſurpation of the ſame title by JOHN biſhop of Conſtantinople; a title which that great prelate did not ſcruple to call blaſphemous, and the uſurper of it the forerunner of Antichriſt. The churches of Rome and Conſtantinople were two ſeparate branches of the church of CHRIST; to their exiſtence as ſuch, their holding communion with each other was not eſſential. The church of England is alſo a ſeparate branch of the church of CHRIST; its ſeparation, therefore, from the church of Rome is a circumſtance, by which its exiſtence as a church can in no wiſe be affected; becauſe it poſſeſſes within itſelf all thoſe characteriſtic marks by which a church, as a ſociety of CHRIST's forming, is diſtinguiſhed; and of which it was in full

poſſeſſion, before its connection with the church of Rome took place. The proteſtantiſm, therefore, of the church of England, conſiſts in the right which one independent branch of the church of CHRIST claims, of proteſting, in its collective character, againſt the errors of another branch of it; with which, from local circumſtances, it may, or may not, hold communion.

For by the unity of the Chriſtian church, we do not underſtand a *neceſſary* communion between all branches of that church, however diſperſed, or however diſtinguiſhed from each other; for this muſt depend upon circumſtances: but that unity which every branch of the Chriſtian church poſſeſſes within itſelf, when all its members, being joined together in the ſame mind, and the ſame doctrine, live in dutiful obedence to thoſe who have the rule over them, and in Chriſtian fellowſhip with each other.

But the idea annexed to the word *proteſtantiſm*, by the Diſſenter from the church of England, is, that it eſtabliſhes the right, which every individual claims, of judging for himſelf in religious matters; and ſeparating from the church, of which he ought to continue a member, for any reaſon which to him may appear ſufficient; or, ſhould he be ſo diſpoſed, for no

reaſon at all. He who cannot ſee the difference between theſe two caſes, muſt, it is to be feared, be in a condition ſomewhat ſimilar to that in which the Jews were, when their invincible prejudices would not ſuffer them to acknowledge our SAVIOUR's character; they had eyes to ſee, but would not ſee. For in the one caſe, we behold the deliberate act of an independent branch of the church of CHRIST, vindicating its own rights againſt the uſurped tyranny of another branch of the ſame church, and breaking off communion with it, for the ſake of preſerving the purity of its own worſhip; in the other, we ſee the act of the individual Chriſtian, ſetting up his own way of thinking as his definitive ſtandard of judgment in religious matters; a mode of proceeding abſolutely incompatible with the exiſtence of the church as a ſociety; and caſting himſelf out of her communion, for the ſake of gratifying ſome private prejudice or opinion.

To us theſe two caſes appear widely different; but not more ſo, I believe, than they would have done to thoſe original foreign reformers,* who, on their firſt withdrawing from a corrupt church, la-

* CALVIN and BEZA in particular.

mented the neceſſity they were under, of ſeparating from the eſtabliſhed government of the church of CHRIST; and thought that no curſe could be too bad for thoſe who ſeparated from it, when in a reformed ſtate. Their ſubſequent change of ſentiment upon this ſubject, in conformity to times and circumſtances, does ſo little credit either to the men or their cauſe, that we are glad to paſs it by in ſilence.

Ever ſince the æra of the Reformation, the church of England has been conſidered to be the firmeſt bulwark of Proteſtantiſm. So far as the Diſſenter agrees with her, in proteſting againſt the errors of the Romiſh church; ſo far he may be ſaid to be at unity with her: but when that right, which juſtifies the Diſſenter, in common with the church of England, in ſeparating from a corrupt branch of the Chriſtian church, is extended to juſtify his ſeparation from a branch of the church, confeſſedly not in the ſame ſtate of corruption, and of whoſe members no unlawful terms of communion are required; and to authoriſe his ſetting up a church of his own, independent of epiſcopal government; the Diſſenter quits the original ground of proteſtantiſm, and places himſelf upon that of ſchiſm; and in ſuch caſe he becomes a *ſchiſmatic* grafted upon a *proteſtant*.

Freedom of inquiry into the grounds of religion is readily acknowledged to be the diſtinguiſhing principle of the proteſtant cauſe. But this principle, if not exerciſed under proper reſtraint, will deſtroy the cauſe it is deſigned to ſerve. That law muſt be uſeleſs, from which every man has a plea of private exemption lodged in his own breaſt. And all conſtituted authority in the church muſt be annihilated, if the right of private judgment in religious matters, in the extent to which it is carried by ſome people, is to be admitted.

Our SAVIOUR we find giving direction in a particular caſe, for an appeal to the judgment of the church; from whence we are obviouſly led to conclude, that it was his deſign that a certain degree of reſpect ſhould be paid to its deciſions. Matt. xviii. 17. The church, we are moreover told by the Apoſtle, is "the pillar and ground of the truth." 1 Tim. iii. 15. By which we underſtand, that the revelation of the Goſpel is a ſacred depoſit, which CHRIST has left with his church, to the end that it might be propagated and ſupported in the world by that ſpirit and authority, which were committed to its miniſters for that purpoſe. Therefore the biſhops, who are thoſe ſpiritual fathers, to whoſe care CHRIST

has committed his church upon earth, are called upon by the Apoſtle, not only "to ſpeak and exhort, but alſo to rebuke with all authority, and to let no man deſpiſe them."

Where authority is committed, it is certainly with the intent that, ſo far as the exerciſe of this authority properly extends, it ought to be obeyed. In the caſe before us, then, we do not heſitate to ſay, that in proportion as the authority of the church is diſregarded, the pillar of truth is ſhaken, and the cauſe of Chriſtianity ſuffers.

In conſequence, indeed, of the abuſe that has been made of the ſpiritual authority, many have thought it not poſſible to be too much upon their guard againſt it. To ſteer clear, therefore, of the impoſitions of the Romiſh prieſthood, they have haſtily determined to pay no attention to that ſacred office at all. But this, ſurely, is to correct one error by running into its oppoſite; by exchanging a blind credulity for a contemptuous diſregard for a Divine inſtitution.

Without encroaching, then, upon the right of private judgment, which, to a certain degree is acknowledged, we may venture to ſay in ſupport of eccleſiaſtical authority, that if CHRIST hath appointed certain perſons in his church, diſtinguiſhed by their

ſtation and office to be teachers and guides, it is the duty of the members of that church to be taught and guided by them, ſo far as their teaching and guidance conform to the revelation which they have in commiſſion to publiſh. When the teaching or direction of theſe appointed guides appears, not in the mere private opinion of the party, but upon evident and ſubſtantial reaſons, to be contrary to the revealed will of GOD, they can no longer be a proper rule of duty; in ſuch caſe the member of the church exerciſes the right of private judgment. But it muſt be remembered, at the ſame time, that though the private Chriſtian be juſtified in the ſight of GOD for withholding active obedience from any rule or practice, which in his conſcience are inconſiſtent with the laws of CHRIST, for he is to obey GOD rather than man; yet if in this caſe, inſtead of patiently ſubmitting to the penalties denounced againſt his diſobedience, he openly reſiſt the authority of his appointed governors, by a conduct in direct oppoſition to their injunctions; he thereby renders himſelf accountable to GOD for rebellion againſt the eſtabliſhed government of his church.

Upon this ſubject, then, we make the revealed will of GOD the ſole ſtandard of judgment, and call

for no ſubmiſſion to the clergy that may be proved to be incompatible with it; but in doubtful caſes, upon which a difference of opinion prevails, we claim that degree of deference to the determination of the appointed guides and teachers of the church, which a reſpect for their ſtation demands, and the end for which their office was inſtituted, abſolutely requires.

With leſs authority than this, it is not to be conceived, how it is poſſible for miniſters of the church to execute the duties of their ſtation. For if, in doubtful caſes, where no poſitive law of GOD is to be found for the direction of the conſcience, or where the law produced is differently interpreted, the opinion of the ruler and guide, of him who is appointed by GOD to teach in the church, is not to overrule that of the party to be taught; we have a government inſtituted without any authority annexed to it. For in this caſe every private Chriſtian is left in a ſtate of independence, to judge and determine for himſelf; upon which plan, the church, as a viſible ſociety, (the very being of which implies an authority to command, and an obligation to obey) could no where exiſt.

Subject to the above limitations, the eccleſiaſtical authority is no abridgment of Chriſtian liberty. Under theſe limitations, therefore, we feel ourſelves

juſtified in ſupporting its cauſe againſt the right of private judgment; taken in that unlimited ſenſe, in which its zealous advocates are diſpoſed to conſider it.

Whilſt, therefore, we proteſt againſt the Popiſh extreme, of leading men blindfold in their Chriſtian profeſſion, as inconſiſtent with the character of reaſonable beings; we at the ſame time do not ſcruple to affirm, that every man is not qualified to form a judgment for himſelf in religious matters, much leſs to ſet up for a teacher and guide to his brethren. Were this the caſe, the paſtoral office had been an uſeleſs one; and GOD, who does nothing in vain, would never have delivered a commiſſion to *particular* perſons, which might, with equal advantage, have been exerciſed indiſcriminately by all: much leſs would He have thought it neceſſary to have furniſhed thoſe perſons with extraordinary powers for the diſcharge of it.

It was a complaint made by one of the primitive writers of the church, "that the ſenſe of the ſcriptures was the only piece of knowledge, which every one thought himſelf a competent judge of, without pains or ſtudy, without the help of a guide or inſtructor:" a preſumption, which the levity and thoughtleſſneſs of the age have tended to increaſe. But whilſt

there are things hard to be underſtood in the ſcriptures, which unlearned and unſtable men did in the Apoſtles' days wreſt to their own deſtruction; the notion that any man, without the aid of ſtudy or learning, is qualified to be an expounder of the word of GOD; "rightly to divide the word of truth," as the Apoſtle expreſſes it; ſeems calculated not ſo much to ſerve the cauſe of religion, as that of folly, enthuſiaſm, and impoſture.

If men, therefore, are determined to exerciſe this boaſted right of private judgment, at all events, upon the idea that Chriſtian liberty authoriſes every man to worſhip GOD in his own way; they ſhould at the ſame time remember, that if through pride, or ſelf-conceit, they deſpiſe inſtruction; and by turning their backs upon thoſe paſtors whom GOD has appointed to direct them, they fall into error, or prove the means of leading others into it; they muſt thank themſelves for the conſequences.

Suppoſing it poſſible that men might err with the church, they would have this plea in their favour; that they had followed thoſe, whom, according to the conſtitution of the country in which GOD had placed them, they had been taught to look up to as their guides. Whereas if they have left the church,

and the truth together, the choice has been their own; and they will have two things to anſwer for: firſt, the embracing error, when truth was before them; and in the next place, the breaking the peace of the church, of which, according to CHRIST's inſtitution, and upon the ſuppoſition that no unlawful terms of communion have been required from them, they ought to have continued dutiful members.

The looſe way of thinking that prevails upon this ſubject, can make no alteration in the ſubject itſelf. The plan upon which CHRIST has eſtabliſhed his church in the world muſt continue, till its object ſhall have been accompliſhed. And though this church, from the days of its firſt ſettlement, hath been paſſing from country to country, as the inhabitants of each became reſpectively unworthy of its longer continuance among them; yet for our comfort we are aſſured, that the gates of hell ſhall not completely prevail againſt it. In one part of the world or another, it will be found to the end of time.

How long it may be in the counſel of GOD to continue it in this country, He only knows. But the preſent divided ſtate of Chriſtians, ſo much lamented by all ſound members of the church, together with that too general indifference for all religious

opinions, which, under the fallacious term of *liberality of ſentiment*, now prevails, holds out to us no very promiſing proſpect.

So long indeed as a notion prevails, to which the practice of the world gives countenance, that it matters not what religious profeſſion a man makes, or with what religious ſociety he connects himſelf; it will be impoſſible to ſay any thing upon the ſubject of religious conformity, that will not be liable to cavil and objection; becauſe, under theſe circumſtances, we are not dealing with the reaſon, ſo much as with the prejudices and paſſions of mankind; which are always, more or leſs, in a ſtate of rebellion againſt every thing that wears the appearance of reſtraint or ſubmiſſion.

But if men will miſtake the liberty with which CHRIST has made them free; namely, a deliverance from the dominion of over-ruling paſſions, from the abſurdities of heatheniſh idolatry, and the yoke of the Jewiſh ritual; for a freedom from all reſtraint, an uncontroled exertion of private judgment in religious matters, and an independence of eccleſiaſtical inſtitutions; we cannot be ſurpriſed, that their conduct upon this ſubject ſhould militate againſt the plan laid down by CHRIST for the eſtabliſhment of his

church. Whilſt thoſe prejudices and paſſions, which the Chriſtian religion was deſigned either to regulate or ſubdue, maintain their ground in the human mind, the ſtandard of judgment ſet up in the Goſpel will be rendered in a great degree uſeleſs. Men, under theſe circumſtances, will perſuade themſelves, either that it does not apply to them, or by ſome fallacy or other will contrive to evade the concluſion, that muſt otherwiſe have been drawn from it. Thus *ſelf-deception* is induſtriouſly put in practice, in order to ſteer clear of that troubleſome thing called *ſelf-conviction*.

In fact, human pride is, generally ſpeaking, ſo much mixed up with human error, that till one can be ſeparated from the other, there is little hope of effecting an agreement of ſentiment upon any diſputed ſubject; for men will not ſee what they are not diſpoſed to acknowledge.

But when men "*become as little children*," poſſeſſed of that meek, lowly, and teachable temper, which alone renders them capable or deſirous of information; the Bible, although it cannot ſpeak a plainer language than it does at preſent, will then be better underſtood; becauſe men will ſit down to it, not with a view to confirm opinions already embraced, but to draw from it, in ſimplicity and ſincerity,

that knowledge, which by Divine grace it was deſigned to convey to all diſpoſed to receive it.

In that caſe, they will perceive, that one great object which CHRIST had in view in the eſtabliſhment of his church, was, that the members of it might be joined together in the bond of peace and unity; in the language of ST. PAUL, that "there might be no ſchiſm in the body:" and conſequently, that no gratification of private fancy or opinion, much leſs of prejudice or paſſion, ought to be weighed in the ſcale againſt this moſt *eſſential* conſideration. ST. PAUL has ſo fully determined this point in the caſe of ſome of his Corinthian converts, by telling them, that even the miraculous gifts of which they were in poſſeſſion, would prove no juſtification for their diſturbing the peace and order of the church, as to leave nothing neceſſary to be added on that ſubject. In the judgment of ST. PAUL, the gift of prophecy, the underſtanding all myſteries, and all knowledge, and all faith, were as nothing in compariſon with that charity, by which it was deſigned that the members of the Chriſtian church ſhould be joined together.

In the judgment of the world, what was of ſuch conſequence in the early days of the church, is now,

we are ſorry to think, become of no conſequence at all; and that harmony among Chriſtians, for which our SAVIOUR earneſtly prayed, and which the Apoſtles and primitive rulers of the church laboured ſo conſtantly to promote, is now become a matter of comparative indifference: as we muſt conclude to be the caſe, when we ſee men, not only without thoſe miraculous gifts, upon which the Corinthians preſumed, but oft times without that degree of knowledge neceſſary to qualify them to underſtand the letter of the Goſpel, which they undertake to publiſh, drawing congregations after them, and making the ſupport of ſome private conceit, or the ſlighteſt difference of opinion upon matters not eſſential to the Chriſtian cauſe, a ſufficient ground for ſeparation from their appointed teachers.

But would men conſider, that charity and humility are two diſtinguiſhing marks of a Chriſtian, they would feel themſelves diſpoſed to believe more, and to diſpute leſs. Would the men to whom we now more particularly allude conſider, that the ſubmiſſion of human reaſon to the revealed word of GOD is part of that ſelf-abaſement, which the Chriſtian is called upon to practiſe; whoſe every "thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of

CHRIST;" they would ſtand with leſs confidence upon ground of their own chooſing, than they do at preſent; and would feel themſelves more in a diſpoſition to be taught, than to teach. For, without being an advocate for blind credulity, the evils of which have been abundantly manifeſted, we do not heſitate to ſay, that there are in religion many things which, by the generality of mankind, muſt in ſome degree be taken upon truſt; becauſe the generality of mankind are not qualified to form a competent judgment of the evidence upon which they ſtand.

Whilſt the beſt informed will, upon the conſideration that now "we know only in part," be moſt ready to ſubſcribe to the idea, that in certain caſes the honour of GOD is more advanced by the ſubmiſſion, than by the exertion, of the human underſtanding.

And if this idea prevail, when applied to ſubjects of primary conſideration, as revealed articles of faith; it will not ſurely, when the peace of the church is concerned, be found inapplicable to matters, which revelation may have left more undetermined. "For the ſpirit of CHRIST, (as Biſhop ANDREWS long ſince obſerved) is the ſpirit of ingenuity, which will freely ſubmit itſelf to that which is expedient, even in things of their own nature lawful. The not ob-

ſerving whereof, with good heed and diſcretion, hath in old time filled the world with many a ſuperſtitious imagination; and in our days hath healed the imagination, and ſuperſtition, and hypocriſy, with another of riot and licentious liberty, as bad as the former, and a great deal worſe."

The only remedy for this evil, the fruitful ſource of all ſin and hereſy in the world, is to be found in the promotion of that charitable ſpirit of the Goſpel, "which envieth not; which is not puffed up; which behaveth not unſeemly; which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;" rather than that brotherly love, the bond of Chriſtian perfectneſs, ſhould be broken. A ſpirit, which it is my duty to preſs moſt earneſtly upon Chriſtians; from the full conviction, that envyings, diviſions, and hereſies, are thoſe works of the fleſh, which moſt effectually ſerve the cauſe of that grand enemy, whoſe conſtant employment it is, ſo far as in him lies, to render abortive the Chriſtian ſcheme for the ſalvation of fallen man.

DISCOURSE X.

On the Advantages attendant upon a conscientious Communion with the CHURCH; *together with the Disadvantages consequent upon a wilful Separation from it.*

THE weight which any practice or opinion ought to have upon the mind, muſt depend, in a great degree, on the concluſion to be drawn from it. Were not the advantages and diſadvantages conſequent on a communion with, or ſeparation from, the church to be made apparent; all that has been written on theſe ſubjects might, for the moſt part, be conſidered as waſte paper. For if nothing is to be gained or loſt by the determination of man's conduct in this reſpect, it certainly becomes a matter of indifference, with what ſociety of Chriſtians he is connected; and in this caſe he might, in religious matters at leaſt, be left at liberty to follow the guidance of his own fancy or opinion.

But if the church is to be ſeen in the light in which we have placed it, as a ſociety of CHRIST's forming, for the expreſs purpoſe of men being ſaved in it from the corruption and condemnation of a wicked world; it becomes a matter of eſſential conſideration with every man, whether he be a member of that church or not.

To enable the Chriſtian, then, to draw the concluſion neceſſary to confirm his judgment in this caſe, we proceed, in conformity with our plan, to point out the advantages and diſadvantages conſequent upon a communion with, or ſeparation from, the church. In doing this, it may be proper to conſider man, firſt, in the relation in which he ſtands to GOD, as redeemed by the blood of his crucified Son; and, ſecondly, in that in which he ſtands to his fellow-creatures, as member of a civilized ſociety.

It is a poſition, we preſume, not to be controverted, that if the ſalvation of fallen man be an act of free grace on the part of GOD, (as Divine revelation has informed us that it is) man ought thankfully to receive it on the terms upon which it is beſtowed; and of courſe to conform himſelf to any plan ſet on foot by GOD for the purpoſe of carrying his gracious deſign into effect. The probable conſequence of his

acting otherwiſe, muſt have that weight in the mind of every reaſonable man, as to induce him to ſteer wide of the poſſibility of it.

In a matter of this eſſential importance, no gratification of private conceit or prejudice, no attachment to particular ſect or opinion, will be ſuffered to preponderate againſt the ſingle conſideration of conformity to the revealed will of GOD. "What is written, how readeſt thou?" will be the anſwer which every wiſe man will be ready to receive and to profit by; conſidering that He who opened the gate of everlaſting life, muſt be the ſureſt guide to conduct man into it.

Upon an appeal to this revealed will, as delivered to us in the ſacred writings, we have the plan of Divine wiſdom in the ſalvation of fallen man ſo clearly laid before us, that whatever we may in charity hope in the caſe of others, we are at leaſt qualified to form ſome deciſive concluſions in our own. Were it not ſo, it would be for little purpoſe, it ſhould ſeem, that the ſacred records have been put into our hands.

Upon an appeal to theſe records, we find the church called, as hath been above obſerved, the body of CHRIST; that body, of which He is the *Head* and

Saviour. "CHRIST (ſays the Apoſtle) is the *Head* of the church, and He is the *Saviour* of the body." Eph. v. 23. And we no where read of him in the character of a *Saviour*, but with reference to that church, which he is ſaid to have purchaſed with his blood. In conſequence of this purchaſe, the church is conſidered to be the peculiar property of CHRIST; every member of it, therefore, muſt have a peculiar intereſt in him. The church, then, according to the idea which the ſcripture has taught us to form of it, is that ſpiritual aſſociation, which draws as it were the line of diſtinction between thoſe who are living without GOD, and conſequently without hope, and thoſe who are formally admitted into covenant with Him, and ſealed with "the holy ſpirit of promiſe, as an earneſt of their future inheritance."

Taken in this light, the church on earth may be conſidered as a preparatory ſtage in the road to man's future happineſs; it being a ſchool of diſcipline eſtabliſhed by CHRIST, for the purpoſe of making every member of it meet for the poſſeſſion of his heavenly inheritance. In conſequence of man's admiſſion into this ſchool, he is no longer conſidered as "a ſtranger and foreigner, but as a fellow-citizen with the ſaints, and of the houſhold of GOD."

Thus the Apoſtle, in conformity with this idea of the church being a ſchool of diſcipline, for the purpoſe of ſpiritualizing the fallen creature man, tells us; that "He who aſcended up on high, that he might fill all things; gave ſome, Apoſtles; and ſome, Prophets; and ſome, Evangeliſts; and ſome, Paſtors and Teachers; for *the perfecting of the ſaints*, for the *work of the miniſtry*, for the *edifying of the body of* CHRIST; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the SON of GOD, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of CHRIST." Eph. iv. 11.

After it was determined upon, in the Divine counſels, that JESUS CHRIST ſhould lay down his life a ſacrifice for ſin, thereby to render it poſſible for man to be ſaved; the next ſtep taken towards the accompliſhment of the great work of ſalvation was, it ſhould ſeem, to prepare and qualify man to reap the benefit of it. To this end, GOD gave CHRIST to be head over all things to his church; that a ſpiritual principle being ſet at work, for the purpoſe of counteracting the effects of that evil principle by which the world had been deſtroyed, all men might not periſh; but that the church, at leaſt, conſidered as a "building properly conſtructed, and fitly framed

together, according to the plan of its divine Maſter-builder, might grow into an holy temple in the LORD."

Hence we ſee the reaſon, why thoſe who were to be ſaved were firſt to be made *members of the church*; the church being, according to the Divine plan, the ordinary road through which they were to travel from this world to the next. "The LORD," we read, "added daily to the church ſuch as ſhould be ſaved." Acts ii. 47. And in the caſe of the devout CORNELIUS, He vouchſafed a particular revelation, for the purpoſe of ſecuring his admiſſion into it; a circumſtance which leaves us in no doubt with reſpect to the importance of the object in view upon the occaſion.

The advantages and diſadvantages conſequent, then, upon a communion with, or ſeparation from, the church, may here begin to be eſtimated.

Communion with the church is conformity to the Divine plan for our ſalvation; ſeparation from it is ſetting up a plan of our own, if not in oppoſition to, at leaſt in ſome degree independent of, the former. The one is putting ourſelves under GOD's training; by becoming diſciples in his ſchool, conforming to thoſe rules, and making uſe of thoſe means, which have been appointed by Him for the advancement of our ſpiritual concerns. The other is, in a degree at

leaſt, taking the work of ſalvation into our own hands; by ſetting up a ſyſtem of Chriſtian education for ourſelves. In the one caſe, we ſubmit, as in humility we ought, to the wiſdom of GOD; in the other we make ourſelves wiſer than GOD, by an attempt to travel to heaven in a road different from that which He has graciouſly marked out for us: a conduct which leads to ſomething like the following impious concluſion—that, in the great work of redemption, GOD was not the beſt judge of the manner in which it was to be carried into the moſt compleat effect.

But, alas! there always hath been in man a ſtrong propenſity to be the carver and contriver of his own happineſs; in other words, to be an *independent* being. ADAM, through the perſuaſion of the tempter, would be wiſer than GOD; and his fall was the conſequence of his folly. The happineſs of man muſt depend upon his obedience to the will of his Maker. But this is a truth not ſo generally acted upon, as it is acknowledged. The unregenerate man, feels at all times the ſame diſpoſition that ADAM did, to follow a will of his own, in contradiction to the Divine will; and to govern himſelf, rather than be governed by GOD. To this end he ſets out with doubting,

then with diſbelieving, what GOD has revealed; and being advanced thus far in his progreſs towards rebellion, his next ſtep actually commences it by forming plans and ſchemes of his own, which he thinks better calculated to anſwer the purpoſe in view than thoſe which come recommended by an authority, which he feels a natural indiſpoſition to admit. It is a portion of this ſtrong propenſity, which man has to judge and act for himſelf, that prevails with the generality to ſeparate from the church; upon the plauſible, though miſtaken idea, of ſerving GOD more acccepiably in a way of their own: without conſidering, that it is not the worſhipping GOD in the way they pleaſe, but in the way He has appointed, that will ſecure to them his bleſſing. To judge in ſome meaſure of the conſequences reſulting from ſuch ſelf-willed conduct, ſo far as they belong to our preſent ſubject, it may be proper to conſider, what we we have in the church, and what out of it; that the reaſonable man, balancing the advantages of communion with, againſt thoſe of a ſeparation from it, may judge for himſelf.

From the authority of the ſacred writings we conclude, that where the Chriſtian ſacraments are *duly* adminiſtered, by perſons regularly appointed to that

ſacred office, according to the plan originally laid down by the Apoſtles, there we find the church of CHRIST. From the ſame authority we learn, that this church is to continue to the end of the world. The unity conſequently of the Chriſtian church muſt mean the ſame now that it ever did; and a ſeparation from it muſt be attended with conſequnces as dangerous in the preſent day as at any former period. For the church of CHRIST is but *one;* and all the promiſes of the Goſpel are excluſively made to that *one* church. None conſequently but members of that church, can lay claim to an intereſt in thoſe promiſes; upon the ſame principle, that none but thoſe who have been admitted members of any human ſociety, can lay claim to the privileges belonging to it. Thus the direction given to thoſe who were ſtruck with St. PETER'S ſermon was this, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt." Acts ii. 38. By which we underſtand, that admiſſion into the church was conſidered by the Apoſtle as a neceſſary qualification for the gift of the Holy Ghoſt. Indeed, from the general tenour of ſcripture, it is to be concluded, that none but thoſe who are members of the church, can be

partakers of the ſpirit by which it is accompanied. Without, therefore, preſuming to determine upon the condition of thoſe who are out of the church, we are at leaſt juſtified in ſaying, that their hope of ſalvation muſt be built upon ſome general idea of Divine mercy, to which the member of the church has a *covenanted claim*. In the one caſe we have an act of Grace indeed; but for the performance of which there is no ſecurity, becauſe it does not ſtand on the ſure ground of any revealed promiſe: whilſt in the other we build on a poſitive act of Covenant, which aſſuredly will take place, according to the conditions on which it has been made; becauſe "He is faithful who hath promiſed."

In this *one* church, then, we have the ſacraments of CHRIST's appointment; as ſeals of that covenant, by which fallen man lays claim to eternal life. In this *one* church, we have the ambaſſadors for CHRIST, whoſe ſacred office it is to adminiſter, in the name of Him whom they are commiſſioned to repreſent, the ſacraments of that covenant, which GOD on his part is thereby engaged to fulfil. In this *one* church, we have moreover the ſpirit of CHRIST accompanying his own ordinances; according to the promiſe made at the original eſtabliſhment of this church,

that He would "be with it always, even to the end of the world"

Such are the eſſential advantages attendant upon communion with the church.

Let us now conſider for a moment the diſadvantages conſequent upon a ſeparation from it.

When you leave the church, then, it ſhould be remembered, you leave the miniſters and ſacraments of CHRIST behind you. You may indeed appoint other miniſters, and inſtitute other ſacraments; but let it be obſerved, theſe miniſters are not the ambaſſadors of CHRIST; nor are the ſacraments which they adminiſter, the ſacraments of CHRIST: for the eſſence of an ambaſſador's office is, that he ſhould be *commiſſioned* by the party whom he repreſents, and in whoſe name he acts; and the eſſence of a covenant, of which the ſacraments are ſeals, is, that it ſhould be binding upon the party in whoſe name it is made. But miniſters of the ſeparation are not ambaſſadors of CHRIST, becauſe they have never been ſent by him; and with reſpect to the benefit to be derived from the ſacraments adminiſtered by them, their diſciples muſt not look to GOD, for this obvious reaſon, becauſe GOD is not bound but by covenants of his own making.

Now the effect to be looked for from the Chriſtian ſacraments depends not upon the mere performance of the miniſtry, in the adminiſtration of the elements of water in baptiſm, or of bread and wine in the LORD'S-Supper; (for in that caſe, any miniſter, however appointed, might anſwer the purpoſe;) but upon the ſpirit of GOD accompanying ordinances of his own inſtitution. And there is little reaſon to ſuppoſe, that the Divine bleſſing will accompany irregular miniſtrations, call them by what name you pleaſe; which are not only not ſanctified by Divine appointment, but are moreover in direct oppoſition to that order, which is eſſential to the peace and preſervation of the Chriſtian church. Whoever, therefore, hopes to receive benefit from religious ſervices, muſt perform them according to *GOD's* will, rather than *his own;* for let our religion be ever ſo right and good in our own eſtimation, it cannot, on that account, have any *covenanted* title to thoſe privileges and bleſſings, which are by Divine authority annexed to the church of CHRIST.

In this ſenſe, the primitive fathers are to be underſtood, when they ſay, that there is no ſalvation out of the holy Catholic Church. By which is meant, that no *covenanted* plan of ſalvation has been revealed

to man, ſave that which is addreſſed to him as a member of the church of CHRIST.

"The ſecret things belong unto the LORD our GOD." Where, therefore, no knowledge has been vouchſafed, no judgment ſhould be paſſed. In all ſuch caſes every conſiderate man concludes, with faithful ABRAHAM, that "the Judge of all the earth will do right." But ſo far as revelation holds out a light to direct, we are authoriſed and required to judge; becauſe a revelation muſt be ſuppoſed to be given for that purpoſe.

In this revelation then we read, that "no man cometh to the Father, but by CHRIST." And according to the ſame authority, to have an intereſt in CHRIST, man muſt be admitted into his church. In conformity to the general tenour of this revelation, then, we heſitate not to ſay, that there is abſolute ſecurity in the church for every *found* member of it, and that we know of no ſecurity out of it. The difference between the condition of a member of the church of CHRIST at the bar of trial, and of one that is not, appearing to us to be this: the former, in arreſt of judgment, pleads a *covenanted title* to the benefit of an act of grace paſſed by the Judge in his favour; the latter, having no ſuch title to plead, is

obliged to throw himſelf *unconditionally* on the mercy of the court. Upon a matter, therefore, of the utmoſt importance; when there is abſolute *certainty* founded on the revealed word on one ſide, and no ſpecific declaration on the other; the wiſe man, who has conſidered the ſubject, will, it is preſumed, take no long time to ſettle his judgment.

To the foregoing advantages and diſadvantages of primary importance, conſequent upon communion with, or ſeparation from, the church, may be added others; which, though of a ſubordinate kind, will not fail to have their weight in the ſcale of every reaſonable man. When Chriſtians aſſemble in the houſe of GOD, it is underſtood to be for the purpoſe of joining in thoſe acts of religious worſhip, ſuitable to their condition as fallen, ſinful, and dependent creatures. Theſe acts are diſtinguiſhed by the appropriate titles of confeſſion, prayer, and thankſgiving. The firſt, the neceſſary condition of forgiveneſs; "If we confeſs our ſins, GOD is faithful and juſt to forgive them." The ſecond, the condition upon which all Divine bleſſings are to be obtained; "Aſk," ſays our bleſſed Maſter, "and it ſhall be given unto you." The third, that demonſtration of gratitude for mercies and bleſſings beſtowed, which will ever

be proportionate to the ſenſe of the obligation. In the due performance of theſe ſeveral acts of worſhip, accompanied with geſtures of body proper to denote that humiliation which ought to poſſeſs the mind of ſinners, when engaged in communion with their GOD, conſiſts, for the moſt part, the public ſervice of religion.

Such is the idea which the ſcriptures lead us to form upon this ſubject. From whence it appears, that public worſhip muſt be (what the reaſon of the thing tells us it ought to be) the joint act of the congregation aſſembled; that with one mind, and one mouth, GOD may be glorified.

Thus EUSEBIUS deſcribes the ſtate of the church in its early days: "There was one and the ſame power of the Holy Spirit, which paſſed through all the members; one ſoul in all; the ſame alacrity of faith; one common conſent in chaunting forth the praiſes of GOD." For by the nature and conſtruction of church communion, there is that harmony and conſent of mind and mouth required in public worſhip, from whence all public prayers and ſacrifices are ſuppoſed to derive their force. "If two of you," ſays our LORD, "ſhall agree upon earth to aſk any thing, it ſhall be done for you of my Father which is in heaven; for where two or three are gathered

together in my name, there I am in the midſt of them." There muſt then be a conſent, or, according to the original, a συμφωνησις, or *ſymphony*, as well as a meeting together, in public worſhip: whereas the worſhippers have all one common mouth, ſo they ought all to have one heart and one mind, as ST. CLEMENT ſays, " Ημεις ουν εν ομονοια επι το αυτο συναχθεντες, ως εξ ενος στοματος βοησωμεν προς αυτον εκτενως," &c. Let us therefore, being gathered together with one mind into one place, cry ardently to GOD as with one mouth, that we may be partakers of his glorious promiſes. Hence it is, that ST. IGNATIUS ſpeaks of μια προσευχη, μια δεησις, εις νους, μια ελπις, one prayer, one ſupplication, one mind, and one hope: and JUSTIN MARTYR* calls the prayers of the Chriſtians, " κοιναι ευχαι, common prayers: and ST. CYPRIAN† calls the public ſervice of the church, " *unanimis oratio.*" In ſtrict correſpondence with which rational idea is that excellent prayer of ST. CHRYSOSTOM which concludes our church ſervice, which is beſt underſtood in the original. " Ο τας κοινας ταυτας και συμφωνους ημιν χαρισαμενος προσευχας, ο και δυο και

* Apolog. 1. † Epiſt. 11.

τρισι συμφωνεσιν επι τω ονοματι σε τας αιτησεις παρεχειν επαγγειλαμενος." "Thou who haſt given us grace to make theſe *common* and *harmonious* prayers, and who haſt promiſed to two or three praying *in concert* in Thy name to grant their petitions," &c.

A conformity to this primitive pattern is the object which the church has always had in view, upon every public aſſembly of her members. To this end, in that branch of the church, to which we belong, they are furniſhed with a Liturgy, or ſtated form of ſervice, ſo excellently conſtructed as to qualify, and at the ſame time to invite, the congregation aſſembled, to become parties in every act of religious worſhip that is going forward; that there may be no unintereſted ſpectators in a buſineſs in which every individual is concerned, but that the united voice of ſupplication, prayer, and praiſe, may plead ſo powerfully at the Throne of Grace, as not to be reſiſted. And ſuch, we will venture to ſay, is the plan beſt ſuited to the infirmity of our condition, as beſt calculated to prevent the natural diſtractions of the human mind; by raiſing and keeping alive that ſpirit of devotion, neceſſary to qualify fallen man to hold communion with his Maker.

To this reaſonable ſervice performed in our church, let us now oppoſe what is, generally ſpeaking, to be met

with out of it. And could Chriſtians be prevailed upon to diſcard prejudice, there would, it is preſumed, be but one opinion upon this ſubject. Out of the church, indeed, people are aſſembled, under various denominations, for the purpoſe of religious worſhip; and we are ready to give individuals credit for their pious intentions. But in what, it muſt be aſked, does their religious worſhip conſiſt? For certain it is, that in religious aſſemblies out of the church we have (generally ſpeaking) no *public* form, either of confeſſion, prayer, or thankſgiving; the whole attention of the congregation being directed to the performance of the officiating miniſter, whoſe ſervice, be it ever ſoſpiritual, (which, conſidering the qualification of very many who undertake it, we may venture to ſay, is not always the caſe;) is nevertheleſs the ſervice of the miniſter rather than that of the congregation.

In the church the congregation are called upon to become *actual parties* in the ſervice performed; in the words of DAVID, "to worſhip, bow down, and kneel before the LORD their Maker;" for the purpoſe of offering up at the Throne of Grace, with humble, penitent, and contrite hearts, the ſolemn ſacrifice of prayer and thankſgiving; the ſervice performed there, conſequently, is what it ought to be,

the joint ſervice both of miniſter and people; all ſinners before GOD, all ſupplicants for pardon, all petitioners for bleſſings.

Out of the church the congregation are obliged to be, for the moſt part, *hearers* only; it being ſcarce poſſible for them to join in petitions, or to lift up their voice with *one accord* in the celebration of praiſes, which they are unprepared to accompany. How great ſoever therefore the fervour of devotion on the part of the miniſter may be, and how acceptable ſoever his form of prayer, (if the public prayer of any *ſelf-appointed* miniſter may be acceptable at the Throne of Grace) the congregation nevertheleſs, in conſequence of their being little concerned in the ſervice performed, can in reaſon have little to expect from the effect to be produced by it.

But excluſive of *unanimity* being abſolutely neceſſary to accompany the public prayers of an aſſembled congregation, to entitle them to that characteriſtic diſtinction, it is moreover to be obſerved, (and a moſt important obſervation it is) that it was to prevent the ſubtle inſinuation of falſe doctrines into the minds of the people, that the miniſters of the church, for fifteen ages together, were not permitted to uſe their own prayers; and that none were allowed in public,

congregations, but ſuch as were approved and authoritatively enjoined.

This ſingle conſideration ſhould, it might be ſuppoſed, be ſufficient to place an attendance upon the ſervice of the church, when contraſted with that performed in any other place of worſhip, in too ſtriking a point of view, to render further enlargement on this head neceſſary.

But there is an idea which has long prevailed, upon which, though it may be conſidered as ſcarce furniſhing a ſubject for ſerious argument, it may be proper, from the conſideration of the many that are led aſtray by it, to ſay a few words. An ignorance with reſpect to the meaning of ſome particular paſſages of the ſacred writings has given birth to a perſuaſion, which enthuſiaſm, that puts out the eye of reaſon, and deſtroys the ſobriety of religion, has long been diligently employed in cheriſhing and ſupporting; namely, that to comply with the Apoſtolic idea of *praying with the ſpirit*, it is neceſſary that all forms ſhould be ſet aſide, as abſolutely incompatible with that inſpiration, ſuppoſed to be appropriate to extemporary effuſions. But allowing that the ſpirit of GOD does aſſiſt men both in the matter and form of their prayers; it may be aſked, whether we have

not as much reaſon to think, that the public prayers of the church were ſuggeſted by that ſpirit, as the prayers of any private individual? Nay, whether it is not more probable, that a company of learned and pious men, aſſembled for the purpoſe of compoſing a public liturgy for the uſe of the church, after having previouſly invoked the Divine aſſiſtance, ſhould be favoured with that aſſiſtance, rather than any particular perſon; who, without premeditation or ſtudy, and oft times without any qualification for the work, takes upon himſelf to deliver an *extemporary* prayer? Is it to be imagined, that the Holy Spirit ſhould give ſuch a decided preference to that ſervice, upon which leaſt care and attention has been beſtowed, as to vouchſafe to it ſuch an excluſive title to his aſſiſtance; that in compariſon with it the prayer of the church is to be conſidered as a lifeleſs form? If reaſon tell us that this cannot be the caſe, we ſhall not heſitate to conclude, that in uſing the liturgy of the church, we pray as much at leaſt (if not more) the prayers of the ſpirit, than when we accompany any leſs regular ſervice.

The judicious HOOKER, who had well conſidered this ſubject, writes thus decidedly upon it. "Of all helps for the performance of this ſervice of prayer,

the greateſt is that very ſet and ſtanding order itſelf, which, framed with common advice, hath both for matter and form preſcribed whatſoever is herein publicly done. No doubt, from GOD it hath proceeded; and by us it muſt be acknowledged a work of ſingular care and providence, that the church hath evermore held a preſcript form of prayer, although not in all things every where the ſame, yet for the moſt part retaining ſtill the ſame analogy. So that if the liturgies of all ancient churches throughout the world be compared amongſt themſelves, it may be eaſily perceived, they had all one original mould; and that the public prayer of the people of GOD, in churches thoroughly ſettled, did never uſe to be voluntary dictates, proceeding from any man's *extemporal* wit. To him which conſidereth the grievous and ſcandalous inconveniences, whereunto they make themſelves daily ſubject, with whom any blind and ſecret corner is judged a fit houſe of common prayer; the manifold confuſions which they fall into, where every man's private ſpirit and gift (as they term it) is the only biſhop that ordaineth him to this miniſtry; the irkſome deformities, whereby, through endleſs and ſenſeleſs effuſions of undigeſted prayers, they often times diſgrace in moſt inſufferable man-

ner the worthieſt part of Chriſtian duty towards GOD; who herein are ſubject to no certain order, but pray both what and how they liſt; to him, I ſay, which weigheth duly all theſe things, the reaſons cannot be obſcure, why GOD doth, in public prayer, ſo much reſpect the ſolemnity of places where the authority and calling of perſons by whom, and the preciſe appointment, even with what words or ſentences, his name ſhould be called on amongſt his people. The beſt ſtratagem that SATAN hath, who knoweth his kingdom to be no one way more ſhaken than by the public devout prayers of GOD's church, is by traducing the form and manner of them to bring them into contempt; and ſo to ſhake the force of all men's devotion towards them. From this, and from no other forge, hath proceeded a ſtrange conceit, that to ſerve GOD with any ſet form of common prayer is ſuperſtitious. As tho' GOD himſelf did not frame to his prieſts the very ſpeech wherewith they were charged to bleſs the people: or as if our LORD, even of purpoſe to prevent this fancy of *extemporal* and *voluntary* prayers, had not left us, of his own framing, one which might both remain as a part of the church liturgy, and ſerve as a pattern whereby to frame all other prayers with efficacy, yet without ſuperfluity of words."*

* HOOKER's Eccl. Pol. book v.

But after all, it will perhaps be found, that this prevailing idea reſpecting ſpiritual prayer, in the ſenſe in which it is too generally taken, has been grounded upon a miſunderſtanding of the Apoſtle's meaning upon this ſubject. "I will pray," ſays the Apoſtle, "with the *ſpirit*, I will pray with the *underſtanding* alſo." 1 Cor. xiv. 15. To comprehend the meaning of the Apoſtle on this occaſion, it is neceſſary to advert to the particular object he had in view. The Apoſtle then, it is obſerved, is here ſpeaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were graciouſly vouchſafed to the infant church, for the purpoſe of effecting the more ſpeedy and general propagation of the Chriſtian cauſe. Among theſe gifts, that of *praying by the ſpirit* was confeſſedly one. But, alas! through the infirmity of human nature, theſe ſpiritual gifts, deſigned for the edification of the church, were not always employed to that purpoſe. Vanity and oſtentation in the exerciſe of them ſometimes took place of better motives. To correct this notorious abuſe of Divine grace, and to regulate the exerciſe of ſpiritual gifts in ſuch a manner, that they might prove beneficial to the parties for whoſe ſake they were originally granted, was the object the Apoſtle had in view in writing this part of his epiſtle.

That attendants upon a Divine ordinance ſhould be benefited by the miniſter of it, it was abſolutely neceſſary that they ſhould underſtand what they heard. To this end, he who had the gift of tongues, if he prayed in a tongue unknown to his hearers, is required by the Apoſtle to interpret at the ſame time, that his congregation might be benefited as well as himſelf. "I would," ſays the Apoſtle, "that you all ſpake with tongues; (that you all partook of that miraculous gift whereby you might be enabled to ſpeak languages you had never learned;) but rather that you propheſied; for greater is he that propheſieth, than he that ſpeaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may be edified." "Wherefore let him that ſpeaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret." And for the following very evident reaſon: "for," continues the Apoſtle, "if I pray in an unknown tongue, my ſpirit prayeth, but my underſtanding is unfruitful:" not unfruitful to myſelf, but to my congregation. As if he had ſaid, if I pray in an unknown tongue, without at the ſame time interpreting my prayer, the ſpirit within me prayeth, it is true; or I may be ſaid to pray by the ſpirit; but my meaning being unintelligible muſt of courſe be unprofitable to my hearers.

"What is it then? I will pray with the ſpirit, I will pray with the underſtanding alſo." In other words; if therefore I do make uſe of that gift beſtowed upon me, of praying by the ſpirit, I will make uſe of it in a manner that I may be underſtood by my hearers; that they, not leſs than myſelf, may be edified by my prayer. That ſuch is the ſenſe in which praying by the ſpirit is here to be underſtood, we conclude from what the Apoſtle has ſubjoined in the following verſes: "Elſe when thou ſhalt bleſs with the ſpirit, how ſhall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned ſay *Amen* at thy giving of thanks, ſeeing he underſtandeth not what thou ſayeſt; for thou verily giveſt thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my GOD, I ſpeak with tongues more than ye all; yet in the church I had rather ſpeak five words with my underſtanding, that by my voice I might teach others alſo, than ten thouſand words in an unknown tongue." 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

Hence we ſee, that by *praying by the ſpirit* is here meant, praying in a language unknown to the congregation; and by *praying with the underſtanding*, praying in a language with which they are acquainted. And to convince us of the little value the Apoſtle ſet upon this gift of praying by the ſpirit, compared

with the more important conſideration of edifying his hearers, he tells us, that he had rather ſpeak five words in the church to be underſtood, that by his voice he might teach others, than ten thouſand words in an unknown language, though that language were dictated by the ſpirit.

But *praying by the ſpirit*, in the ſenſe in which enthuſiaſts now underſtand that phraſe, is not one of thoſe extraordinary gifts with which the primitive Chriſtians were furniſhed, but ſomething very different; for it is rather an acquiſition of art, attained by habit and practice, and dependent in a great meaſure for its ſucceſs upon the particular genius and abilities of the party, rather than an inſpired gift.

Conſidering it in this light, in which ſound ſenſe has ever conſidered it, we do not heſitate to prefer a ſettled form to any extemporary exertion of the mental faculties, for the following obvious reaſons:

In the firſt place, certain it is, that ſo far as the congregation are concerned, the *extemporary* prayer of the miniſter is to them as much a form as any other. If, then, the congregation muſt have a form in either caſe, it remains only to be conſidered, what form is beſt calculated for their edification. Upon this head, it is preſumed, there can be little diſpute. For on

the one hand, we have an excellent form of prayer, compoſed with great judgment and piety, which the congregation may, and which it is deſigned they ſhould, make their own, by joining in it; on the other, we have (generally ſpeaking) an imperfect and unconnected form, in which they cannot join, becauſe, on account of its being ſtrange to their ears, they muſt, in a great degree, be unprepared to accompany it. Without meaning, therefore, to reflect upon the abilities of teachers out of the church, or to impute to all the improprieties of which ſome have been notoriouſly guilty; I think it may be ſaid, that the only choice left to the hearers upon this ſubject, is, whether they will have a *good* form or a *bad* one; a form of ſound words, with which they are previouſly acquainted, on the one hand; or, on the other, a form, upon the propriety of which they cannot at any time depend: experience having proved, that both the words and matter of it are ofttimes ill digeſted, ſometimes indecent, and occaſionally unſound.

Taking the ſubject, then, in this light only, it appears, that, ſo far at leaſt as the edification of the congregation is concerned, the change that enthuſiaſm has introduced into the public worſhip of Chriſtians,

has been much for the worſe; and that the Chriſtian, in leaving the eſtabliſhed ſervice of the church, has gained nothing to balance againſt the eſſential advantages he has loſt.

But there is this further conſideration attached to an eſtabliſhed form of prayer in preference to any other, namely, the promiſe of favourable attention being paid to it by the DEITY; a conſideration which, it is probable, may never have been taken into the account. "If two of you ſhall agree upon earth, (ſays our bleſſed SAVIOUR) as touching any thing that they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my FATHER which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midſt of them." Matt. xviii. 19, 20. On which ORIGEN makes this comment: "This is the cauſe we are not heard when we pray, in that we agree not in all things. For as in muſick there muſt be harmony and agreement of voices, or elſe it delights not the hearers; ſo in the church* an aſſent

* The unreaſonableneſs of *private* prayer in public will appear, by conſidering, that all prayers offered up to GOD in public muſt be publicly known, *conſented to*, and *agreed upon*, by all them that join therein. Thus it ever was in the church of CHRIST—the faithful knew what they prayed for. "You that are faithful (ſays ST. CHRYSOSTOM, Hom. vi. on Tim.) know what things are to be

and agreement is neceſſary, or elſe GOD is not pleaſed, neither will He hear the voice of our prayers." It is to this agreement in prayer, that denominates our public worſhip of GOD *common-prayer*, that CHRIST hath promiſed his preſence. This promiſe conſequently ſeems to belong only to the public prayers of the church; which, by being previouſly compoſed for general uſe, become conſequently the joint prayers of the congregation; a circumſtance which furniſhes a powerful argument in favour of that practice, which has ever taken place in the Chriſtian church. Whereas in other aſſemblies of Chriſtians, where the extemporary prayer of the miniſter conſtitutes the ſubſtance of religious worſhip, the condition upon which this promiſe of our SAVIOUR is ſuſpended, cannot, properly ſpeaking, be performed.

There are, indeed, among ſeparatiſts from the church, thoſe who, from an unhappy perverſity of character, which is continually manifeſting itſelf in a

deſired in prayer, becauſe all prayer (that is public) ought to be *common*. It is the exhortation of IGNATIUS, "that we aſſemble together in one place, and uſe one prayer *common to all*." Epiſt. ad Magn. And the eſtabliſhment of a public form for public prayer, if not an effectual, is at leaſt the beſt, ſecurity that can be deviſed againſt falſe doctrine, becauſe it conſtitutes that public ſtandard of the church, to which an appeal is at all times to be made.

ſettled oppoſition to every thing that is eſtabliſhed, carry their objections to ſettled modes of worſhip to that extent, as to reject even the LORD's prayer, becauſe it is *a form*. To reaſon with ſuch perſons would, probably, anſwer no better purpoſe, than it would have done heretofore to have reaſoned with the Scotch covenanter; who, upon the word of command being given in the field to wheel to the right, ſtood ſtock ſtill; and upon being queſtioned, why he did not obey, gave for anſwer, that his conſcience would not permit him, for the word of command was *a form*, and they had taken up arms to fight againſt *forms*.

It may be proper, however, to ſay one ſhort word on this head, for the conſideration of thoſe, who, whilſt they affect to pray by the ſpirit, reject the LORD's prayer, as laying a reſtraint upon that Divine impulſe, by which they imagine themſelves to be governed. For, in conformity with this idea, the Holy Spirit, whom our SAVIOUR ſent into the world for the purpoſe of bringing all things to the remembrance of his diſciples which He had ſaid unto them, is ſuppoſed to act in oppoſition to a command which CHRIST, when on earth, had given for their direction: "After this manner (ſays CHRIST to his diſ-

ciples) pray ye; Our FATHER," &c. Matth. vi. 9. A form of prayer, which, from its conſtruction, appears to have been originally deſigned for the uſe of a congregation; and which the church, in conformity with our SAVIOUR's original direction, has always thought proper to make a part of our religious worſhip. The concluſion in this caſe is too obvious, it is preſumed, to require being drawn at length.

It may, perhaps, be objected by thoſe from whom we differ upon the ſubject of extemporary prayer, that our reaſoning upon it tends in a great meaſure to deny the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit. On this head, therefore, we obſerve briefly, what we are fully perſuaded of, that whoever is not aſſiſted by the Holy Spirit in prayer, whatever be the form which he may adopt for the purpoſe, will never pray to effect. But whilſt we admit this poſition in its proper ſenſe, we at the ſame time do not heſitate to differ in opinion from enthuſiaſts, with reſpect to what is meant by the ſpirit of prayer. With them it means a ſpirit of ready invention, and extemporary effuſion, which is by no means the certain effect of Divine influence. With us it means, what can proceed from GOD alone, a ſpirit of devotion and pious affection; ſuch as holy DAVID may be ſuppoſed to

have particularly felt, when he compoſed the 42d, the 51ſt, the 84th, and 86th Pſalms; with ſome others, which need not be pointed out.

This ſpirit of devotion, which gave acceptance at the Throne of Grace to the ſimple prayer of the Publican; and without which the moſt perfect compoſition is but a collection of vain words, offenſive to the Being to whom it is addreſſed; is a mixture of humiliation and gratitude, derived from the conſideration of our vileneſs and wretchedneſs on the one hand, and the contemplation of infinite goodneſs and aſtoniſhing loving-kindneſs on the other. Whoever prays in this diſpoſition of ſoul, moſt certainly prays by the ſpirit; becauſe this diſpoſition is not *natural*, but the effect of that Divine influence, which is graciouſly employed for the purpoſe of bringing fallen man back to his Maker.

This devout diſpoſition, the work of the Holy Spirit, is not, it is true, confined to any particular mode of prayer; but, as it confeſſedly depends more upon the *heart* than the *head*, it is more likely to prevail on occaſions, when, in conſequence of the head being leſs occupied with attention to the form or invention of the matter of prayer, the heart is more at liberty to be affected by the ſpirit of it.

A conſideration, how little effect ſoever it may produce in the minds of thoſe who, by their ſeparation from our church, are not in a condition to appreciate it, muſt, it is preſumed, make every conſiderate member of it ſenſible of the advantages he enjoys in the uſe of a liturgy; which, from its excellent conſtruction, is not only calculated to raiſe that ſpirit of devotion eſſential to all religious exerciſes; but which is, moreover, in ſtrict correſpondence with the word of GOD, and the platform of primitive practice.

And would thoſe who now ſeparate from us, but give themſelves the trouble to know what our church is; we are confident, that their zeal, which now flames againſt her without knowledge, would be abated, if not totally extinguiſhed. For let any one that is religiouſly diſpoſed, but do juſtice to her ſervice, by conforming himſelf to the ſeveral parts of it *in ſpirit* and *in truth;* and we dare anſwer for the conſequence. But the misfortune is, and we lament it, that none of thoſe out of the church, and few, alas! of thoſe who are in it, will make the experiment. And hence it is, that the former are ſo violent againſt her, and the latter ſo indifferent for her.

Upon the ſervice of *preaching*, little need be remarked; becauſe it is to be conſidered rather as an

appendage to religious worſhip, than an actual part of it; and being more the ſervice of the miniſter, than of the congregation, the manner in which it is performed may, with more latitude, be left to his judgment and diſcretion. Provided the doctrine delivered be conſonant to the revealed word of GOD, and made intelligible to the hearers, the ſervice of preaching is duly performed; and being calculated to anſwer its end, all further enquiry about it becomes unneceſſary.

But whilſt we are unwilling to ſay any thing that may tend in any degree to depreciate a powerful means of grace, as the ſervice of preaching moſt undoubtedly is, when properly accompanied, we are nevertheleſs obliged to ſpeak of it as it is; with the view of preventing a greater effect being expected from it, than it was deſigned to produce.

The ſervice of preaching was intended to inſtruct Chriſtian profeſſors in their duty; the ſervice of prayer, to procure for them that Divine aſſiſtance which can alone enable them to diſcharge it. Now if the whole of the public performance of religion be in a manner ſwallowed up in preaching, it is eaſy to conceive how the attendants upon it may be *hearers* of the word, and not *doers* of it; poſſeſſing a form of

godlineſs, without knowing any thing of the power of it. For it is as poſſible for a man to be a diligent attendant upon ſermons, and yet manifeſt nothing of the ſpirit of Chriſtianity in his life and converſation; as it is impoſſible for him to be a devout and conſtant ſuppliant at the Throne of Grace, and long remain an unſanctified perſon. For GOD, we are told, will give his Holy Spirit to them that aſk him. But He has no where promiſed, that He will grant it to thoſe whoſe religious ſervice conſiſts in *hearing* only.

It is a remark that has been long ſince made, that no man who prays, can long continue a ſinner; for either his praying will make him leave off ſinning, or his ſinning will certainly oblige him to leave off praying. To which we will add, that a man may hear ſermons all his life-time, and yet be as far from heaven at the end of his ſtage as when he ſet out; but let him pray the prayers of our church, and devoutly attend her ſacraments, and we may venture to anſwer for his ſalvation, though he ſhould have been ſo circumſtanced, as not to have heard a ſingle ſermon during his whole Chriſtian progreſs.

Should the foregoing ideas be conformable to ſound reaſon, the great danger conſequent upon that error of the preſent age, which has led ſo many well-mean-

ing people to comprehend all religious ſervice in that of preaching, will become ſtrikingly apparent.

"It is well known," (ſays Biſhop ANDREWS) that all the time of the primitive church, the ſermon was ever done before the ſervice begun; and that to the ſermon, heathen men, infidels, and Jews, heretics, ſchiſmatics, in ſhort, all ſorts of people, were admitted. But when they went to ſervice, when the Liturgy began, all theſe were voided; not one of them ſuffered to ſtay. It were ſtrange, that that ſhould be the only or the chief ſervice of GOD, whereat they, which were held no ſervants of GOD, no part of the church, might and did remain no leſs freely than they that were."

Thoſe, therefore, who ſeparate from the church, if they will give themſelves liberty to think upon the ſubject, will be ſatisfied, that the only part of religious worſhip, which they have carried away with them, is the *leaſt eſſential* part of her ſervice. And if they will look into the hiſtory of the Chriſtian world, they will be convinced, that in proportion as the religious exerciſe of Chriſtian profeſſors has conſiſted in *hearing* more, and *praying leſs*, the ſpirit of Chriſtianity has ſenſibly declined; and that the only hope of reſtoring it to any thing like its primitive ſtandard muſt

be derived from the re-adoption of thoſe means, by which it was originally promoted.

We know, and we are ſorry to think, that there are many ſerious perſons, who, from an idea that members of our church are mere formal lifeleſs profeſſors of Chriſtianity, have ſeparated from her communion, with the view of joining in what appears to them a more ſpiritual ſervice elſewhere. But though we are not diſpoſed to admit the truth of the reaſon advanced on this occaſion, and are inclined to think that ſeparation from the church is to be traced up to a very different motive, yet we do not feel ourſelves engaged to enter upon this part of the ſubject; our preſent buſineſs being to point out the advantages attendant upon communion with the church, not to enlarge upon the occaſional ill uſe that has been made of them.

To form a fair judgment on this head, we muſt conſider what the ſervice of our church is in itſelf, and the ſpiritual effect which it is calculated to produce; not the little benefit which its formal attendants have actually derived from it. Viewing things in this light, we do not heſitate to ſay, that the circumſtance of the ſeparatiſt from our church having his attention ſo engroſſed with the ſervice of preaching, as it

generally is, how excellent soever that preaching may be, throws an additional weight into the scale of disadvantage derivable from his separation. In consequence of which he is obliged to take up, for the most part, with an easy hearsay kind of religious service, which is not calculated to procure for him either pardon or blessing at the Throne of Grace; whilst the member of the church is, or ought to be, engaged in those more severe and more spiritual exercises, which, when properly performed, are the *covenanted* conditions upon which both are to be obtained.

In treating this subject, we have hitherto considered how man is affected by it, in the relation in which he stands to GOD, as redeemed by the blood of his Son; we will now consider for a moment, how it affects him as member of a civilized community.

One of the most general marks by which Christians are to be known, is the love which they bear to each other. "By this," says CHRIST, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The religion which Christians profess is founded in love, and best calculated to produce it. Its characteristic fruits are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. So that it may be laid down as an axiom,

that where charity or love of the brethren is wanting, there genuine Chriſtianity is not to be found.

Now it has pleaſed GOD in this, as in moſt other caſes, to ordain, that the preſent and future intereſts of mankind, their peace in this world, and that in the next, ſhould travel as it were hand in hand together; by making an uniformity in religious worſhip contribute eſſentially to both. So long as men continue in unity in the church, they are, generally ſpeaking, diſpoſed to live in unity among themſelves. The breaking away from her is but a preparatory ſtep to their breaking away from each other. No ſooner is the centre of unity deſerted, than the bond of Chriſtian fellowſhip, by which men, as members of the church, are held together, is burſt aſunder; and that ſociety, which before conſtituted a compact body, at peace within itſelf, is crumbled into parties and factions.

Certain it is, that union among Chriſtians is to be found only within the walls of the church. Upon leaving thoſe walls, that union is exchanged for endleſs diviſion; which unavoidably generates thoſe evils which the Apoſtle has deſcribed among the works of the fleſh; under the ſeveral heads of "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings, and murders."

So that ſeparation from the church ultimately proves more or leſs fatal to the peace of individuals; as if it were the deſign of GOD, that men ſhould experience in this world, the effects of their deviation from his plan for their ſalvation. For when the paſſions are ſet at work in this buſineſs, a miſtaken zeal for what ſome men conceive to be the truth, becomes the plauſible plea for diſallowing to others that liberty, which they have not ſcrupled to aſſume to themſelves.

This principle, common to all religious differences, conſtitutes the general ground upon which perſecution is built; which, though a word of *partial* application, it being generally confined to the ſeverities which we ourſelves feel, not to thoſe which we inflict on others, is that ſevere ſcourge with which Providence ſeems to have permitted men to afflict each other, as a puniſhment for their mutual deſertion of the Chriſtian character. For whilſt bigots of all deſcriptions perſuade themſelves, that they are inſtruments in GOD's hand for promoting his cauſe, they are in fact only acting under the influence of diſordered paſſions, and gratifying the propenſities of a corrupt nature.

When the Scotch covenanters, through the unhappy diſtraction of the times, had ſucceeded ſo far as

to break off from all connection with the church in their own country, by ſetting up a form of government independent of it; their conſciences, as they pretended, could not be at reſt, whilſt a church continued to exiſt in England; and in their zeal for proſelytiſm, the deſtruction of a whole kingdom was not, by theſe intemperate bigots, thought too dear a price to be paid for the propagation of their favourite cauſe.

The Puritans, in the ſeventeenth century, who fled from hence for the ſake of enjoying a greater degree of religious freedom, than was at that time to be had in this country, were no ſooner eſtabliſhed in their new ſettlement, than they furniſhed the moſt convincing proof, that thoſe who go the greateſt lengths to procure religious freedom for themſelves, are leaſt diſpoſed to allow it to others. The perſecution which, under the forms of law, theſe Puritans ſet on foot againſt ſome of their brethren, who ventured, after their example, to think for themſelves in religious matters, was ſo ſevere, that an order from government was deemed neceſſary to reſtrain its violence. In ſhort, this people, who in England could not bear being chaſtiſed with rods, had no ſooner got free from their fetters, than they ſcourged their fellow refugees with ſcorpions; though the abſurdity, as

well as the injuſtice, of ſuch proceeding might have ſtared them in the face.

Theſe circumſtances, humiliating to man, as a reaſonable creature, have been brought forward to convince the reader, that ſeparation from the church as generally leads to further diſunion among the ſeparatiſts themſelves, as it certainly does to the breach of that charity, by which the Chriſtian religion, when profeſſed in purity, binds all men together.

But, for the conſideration of bigots of every deſcription, whether in the church, or out of it, (for the principle upon which they act is equally to be condemned) be it obſerved, that the honour of GOD can never be promoted at the expence of *Chriſtian charity*; and he that maketh the glory of GOD the end, muſt take the word of GOD for the rule, of his actions. We are told, indeed, that "it is good to be zealouſly affected always in a good thing;" and we readily ſubſcribe to the doctrine. We are, moreover, exhorted by the Apoſtle to "contend earneſtly for the faith;" and GOD forbid, that Chriſtians ſhould at any time be otherwiſe diſpoſed. But whilſt we guard againſt that general indifference in religious matters, which conſtitutes one of the ſtriking characteriſtics of the age; we muſt at the ſame time re-

member, that Chriſtian zeal, under the direction of that wiſdom which deſcendeth from above, will be "pure and peaceable, full of mercy, and of good fruits;" in contradiſtinction to that furious and deſtructive quality, which has at different periods uſurped its ſacred name, but which bears the unequivocal mark of its diſgraceful origin; it being "earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh."

In a word, the zeal of the Chriſtian muſt not be of a kind with that which the Diſciples felt, when they would have called down fire from heaven to deſtroy the city that was indiſpoſed to receive them; but muſt reſemble, as far as may be, the holy and affectionate zeal of that bleſſed perſon, who came into the world, not to *deſtroy* men's lives, but to *ſave* them. And that man knows nothing of the Chriſtian religion, who does not know it to be what it has been here repreſented; and where what is called by that ſacred name, is unaccompanied with the fruits above ſpecified, depend upon it, ſome poiſonous doctrine has been mixed up with it, deſtructive of its ſalutary effect; or the profeſſor, how zealous ſoever he may be, has ſubſtituted the creature of his own imagination, for the truth *as it is in* CHRIST JESUS.

"It were well, (ſays an old writer*) if, inſtead of wild enthuſiaſm, we would come to learn the ſobriety of religion. In which let us heighten our zeal and Divine enthuſiaſm, to adhere ſtrictly to the revealed will of ſcripture; to have a flaming charity for the good of the body, and the unity of the church; that our enthuſiaſm may tend to heal, and not to divide; to advance the glory of GOD, and to humble ourſelves in our own conceits; that we may be willing cheerfully to ſubmit ourſelves to our ſuperiors both in church and ſtate; and not be ſo apt to judge others, as to cenſure ourſelves: and then, though we had different opinions, yet we ſhould have no ſchiſm. We ſhould live together, as members of the ſame body; that though one were more honourable or uſeful than another, yet there would be no ſtrife, no emulation, but which ſhould exceed moſt in mutual good offices, and care for the whole. Such a heaven we ſhould ſee, if we had no ſchiſm."

But the evils reſulting from ſchiſm are not confined to men in their private character of Chriſtians, but affect them alſo in their public one, as members of a civilized ſtate.

* LESLEY.

Schiſm and rebellion have, in all ages of the world, been intimately connected with each other. The ſame diſpoſition of mind that leads individuals to make their own church, if uncontroled, leads them alſo to imagine themſelves qualified to form their own government. Hence it is, that ſchiſmatics have been at all times, more or leſs, what they were in ST. JUDE's days, *murmurers* and *complainers*. By ſuch men this kingdom has once been brought to deſolation. The miniſters of the church were driven from their pulpits by them; that the *godly preachers*, as they were then called, might ſtep into their places. And the fruit of their doctrine, when ripened to perfection, was this: a moſt pious prince was murdered, becauſe he would not join with them in pulling down that church, which he had *ſworn* to ſupport; and the conſtitution of this country was deſtroyed, becauſe it was not built upon a plan of their *own forming*.

The ſame leaven of wickedneſs, which produced thoſe ſcenes of miſery and confuſion in the laſt century, is, it is to be feared, *now* working in this kingdom; and it will be no breach of charity to ſay, that the doctrines, which are at times delivered by ſome of thoſe irregular preachers, with which, unhappily for us, this country ſo much abounds, tend in a

great degree to ſpread the miſchief. In contempt of former experience, and in defiance of an exiſting example, the moſt wretched in its kind that the world ever produced, of the effects attendant upon a general diſſolution of order in ſociety; there are not wanting men, who, either from vanity or deſign, are deſirous of making hazardous experiments, under the plauſible idea of improving a ſcience, upon which few heads are competent to form a judgment; and to the conſequences of a miſtaken theory, upon which the very exiſtence of a ſtate may eventually fall a ſacrifice.

Reformation, it ſhall be readily granted, is at all times a deſirable thing, when the *honeſty* as well as *judgment* of the reforming party are fully to be depended on. But there is a further and very important conſideration belonging to this ſubject, which is ſeldom taken into account; and againſt which neither honeſty nor judgment are a ſufficient ſecurity. In politics, the moſt important events are ofttimes unforeſeen, and derived from cauſes with which they have no immediate or apparent connection. Circumſtances in proof of this poſition are to be met with in the hiſtory of every country. A plan ſet on foot by wiſe and honeſt men may be ſo diſtorted in its work-

ing, by paſſing through the hands of men differently diſpoſed, that the evil eventually produced may far overbalance the good originally projected. For the direct and immediate conſequences of innovation of any kind are, generally ſpeaking, the leaſt important. Hence it follows, that reformers ſhould be men poſſeſſed, not only of ſound heads and honeſt hearts, but alſo of a conſiderable degree of forecaſt, a ſort of anticipating knowledge with reſpect to future events, to enable them to ſee the *remote* as well as *immediate* effect of the means they ſet in motion. For no wiſe man, though ſenſible of an evil, provided it be not of the *intolerable* kind, will riſk a remedy, the operation of which he cannot in ſome meaſure aſcertain; and the effect of which may, from its violence, leave him in a worſe condition than it found him.

With reſpect to ourſelves, poſſeſſed of the beſt government, and the moſt Apoſtolic church in the world, we are nevertheleſs, it muſt be confeſſed, a diſcontented people; owing in part to the hypochondriac feelings of ſome, who know not what it is to be happy under any circumſtances; the deſigned miſrepreſentations of others; and the various projected ſchemes of imaginary reformers, whoſe zeal ſeldom permits them to weigh coolly the poſſible attainment

of ſpeculative perfection, againſt the probable riſk attendant upon the proſecution of it. And perhaps it may be thus accounted for: in proportion as things in this world approach nearer to that perfection beſt calculated to promote human happineſs, there the grand enemy of man, the diſturber of his peace, and the envier of his happineſs, is always moſt buſily employed. And when this prince of darkneſs aſſumes the dreſs of an angel of light, by making religion the tool with which he works for the accompliſhment of his purpoſe, he is then moſt to be dreaded, becauſe *then* he can moſt ſucceſsfully deceive.

Such are the general conſequences reſulting from a ſeparation from the church of CHRIST. A more particular inveſtigation of them would lead into a wider field, than is propoſed to be entered upon, on this occaſion.

Perhaps, indeed, ſome indulgence may be required on the part of the reader, to excuſe the diſproportionate length to which the diſcuſſion of this ſubject has already been drawn out. Not without hopes, however, that what has been ſaid, though in a leſs complete and ſyſtematic form than the importance of the ſubject demanded, may be ſufficient to anſwer the purpoſe in view, where it meets with a mind

diſpoſed to receive it; we haſten to a concluſion, in one ſhort but neceſſary word to the profeſſed members of the Chriſtian church.

Whilſt we are engaged in an earneſt, though humble, endeavour to preſerve the unity of the Chriſtian church, by bringing forward every conſideration which may tend to prevent a ſeparation from it; it ought, moſt aſſuredly, to be a matter of very ſerious concern with the members of that church, that they do not render abortive our endeavour, by a voluntary ignorance of, or ſhameful indifference to, a ſubject, which muſt be regarded as involving in it their moſt important intereſts. To ſecure themſelves againſt ſuch an imputation, it is neceſſary that they do juſtice to the church to which they belong; by making themſelves acquainted with the nature of its conſtitution, the deſign of its eſtabliſhment, and the privileges of which they become partakers by their admiſſion into it. This done, they will never forſake its communion; becauſe they will be convinced, that no plan upon which any other Chriſtian ſociety has been formed, is ſo well calculated to promote the ſpiritual edification of its members, as that to which they belong. But if they will not ſeek to make themſelves acquainted with this intereſting ſubject, not-

withſtanding the abundant means graciouſly vouchſafed to them for that purpoſe; if the religion which they profeſs, inſtead of being built on the firm ground of ſober and rational enquiry, is the mere reſult of early prejudice, and accidental circumſtance; a kind of hereditary poſſeſſion handed down to them from their forefathers, of which they confeſſedly know little, and about which, perhaps, they ſtill care leſs; if, when they come to a place of holy worſhip, they enter not into the ſervices performed there; neither praying the prayers of the church, nor joining in the ſacraments; but when they ought to be on their knees, in humble ſupplication for pardon and grace, they remain on their ſeats unconcerned and unintereſted in the ſacred buſineſs that is going forward: the neceſſary conſequence muſt be, that they will be *dead*, not *living*, members of the church; and it will be no ſubject for ſurprize, if, after having continued in that ſtate for years, without experiencing any communication of Divine ſpirit from the Head to which they *profeſſedly* belong, they ſhould be perſuaded to ſeek unhallowed fire elſewhere.

But be it remembered, the fault in this caſe is not in the church, but in its members; and by cutting themſelves off from the church, upon the imaginary

idea of acquiring that ſpiritual attainment, of which they are not in actual poſſeſſion, in conſequence either of their abuſe or diſuſe of thoſe appointed means to which the Divine grace has been formally annexed; they only render their caſe, it is to be feared, in ſome ſenſe more *hopeleſs* than it was before. A limb, though diſeaſed, whilſt it continue united to the body, may recover; which, when ſeparated from it, muſt inevitably periſh.

CONCLUDING DISCOURSE.

TO convince, is one thing; to prevail with men to act in conformity with that conviction, is another. The former is the general effect of ſound argument, addreſſed to competent underſtandings; the latter is ofttimes attended with a ſpecies of humiliation, to which the pride of man will not ſuffer him to ſubmit.

It is never too ſoon to tread back our ſteps, when convinced that we are not travelling in the right path; becauſe the difficulty of our return to it increaſes in proportion to our diſtance from it. But, alas! all men poſſeſs not firmneſs of mind, to enable them to do juſtice to their reaſoning faculty; chooſing rather, out of compliment to the opinion of the world, which is rarely worth obtaining, to continue in error, than to take (as they conceive) ſhame to themſelves, by acknowledging that they have been

miſtaken; which is in fact, in other words, to ſay that they are wiſer to-day than they were yeſterday.

This remark is, perhaps, more frequently exemplified in religious, than in any other concerns in life: for in proportion to the importance of the object in purſuit is, generally ſpeaking, the ſtrength of prejudice in favour of the plan adopted for the purpoſe. Hence it is, that of the many who ſeparate from the church, very few can ever be perſuaded to return to it. You may ſucceed, if maſter of the ſubject, in removing all objections, in anſwering all arguments, in ſatisfying all ſcruples; ſo that ſeparatiſts ſhall in a manner be left ſpeechleſs: but when you think yourſelf upon the point of accompanying them to the houſe of GOD as friends, there is a lion in the way—the pride of the human heart will not ſuffer them to proceed. I once remember having a long and intereſting converſation with a pariſhioner, of whoſe underſtanding I had formed a favourable judgment, upon the ſubject of his leaving the church; and was ſo happy as to ſucceed in convincing him. When arrived at this deſired point, his immediate queſtion was, "what I would have him do in the caſe?" To which the anſwer was obvious; that he ſhould immediately return to the place from whence he had

gone aſtray. The queſtion ſubjoined to this advice manifeſted the infirmity of human nature. "But, ſir, (continued he) what ſhall I do with all thoſe, whom I have drawn after me from the church?" 'Bring them back with you to the church again, as the beſt amends that can be made for your paſt error, and the ſtrongeſt teſtimony that can be given of your preſent ſincerity;' was the reply. But, alas! this was a trial too hard for fleſh and blood; the man was not proof againſt the remarks to which he foreſaw his conduct muſt ſubject him; he therefore continues to this day a member of the Meeting, in ſpite of his better judgment. This caſe, it is to be feared, is by no means a ſingular one. Little hopes, therefore, can be entertained, that in a ſubject of this kind converſion will often accompany conviction. For when ſchiſm once takes poſſeſſion of the human mind, it bears ſome reſemblance to a cancer in the human body, which ſpreads its poiſonous influence ſo generally through the ſyſtem, that the diſeaſe ſeldom terminates but with the life of the patient.

Nevertheleſs, how deſperate ſoever the caſe, the phyſician, while life remain, perſeveres in his attempt to cure. Upon this principle, rather than upon any ſanguine hope of ſucceſs, I have thrown

together the foregoing thoughts upon a ſubject, which to me appears of the utmoſt importance. My earneſt wiſh in ſo doing has been, in the firſt inſtance, to diſcharge ſome part of my duty towards thoſe immediately committed to my care. In the ſecond, to do ſome little good in a more general way, ſhould GOD think me worthy to become an inſtrument of doing good in ſuch a cauſe.

It is not to be expected that what has been written, ſhould make impreſſion upon thoſe who will not give themſelves leave to think differently from what they may have been accuſtomed to think; for prejudice, generally ſpeaking, turns its back upon reaſon: but I cannot help indulging a hope, that where it meets with a candid and ingenuous mind, it will not fail of being attended with ſome effect. The only probable way to ſucceed in this caſe ſeems to be, by putting men upon the proper uſe of their rational faculties, from a conviction that ignorance is the prolific parent of error.

All men, it is certain, are not qualified to penetrate into the depths of ſcience; nor is it neceſſary for the general purpoſes of life, that all men ſhould be either hiſtorians, metaphyſicians, logicians, or critics. But all men are concerned to know what plan has been

revealed for the promotion of their eternal welfare; and in what manner their conduct muſt correſpond with it, to ſecure its effect. It is to be ſuppoſed, therefore, that an all-gracious GOD has furniſhed all men with an underſtanding competent to this purpoſe, provided it be properly employed. To that underſtanding the appeal is here made. For the cauſe we have in hand, requires not that we ſhould put out the eyes of men, in order to lead them blindfold in their Chriſtian journey. On the contrary, we are deſirous that they ſhould ſee for themſelves, and ſee clearly; upon the idea, that the more they ſee, the leſs prejudice they will entertain, and the more they will be ſatisfied with the direction of their appointed guides.

With this view the Bible is put into their hands; and they are required, after the example of the Bereans, to ſearch and examine, whether what has been ſaid upon the ſubject of the church be agreeable to the tenour of the Apoſtolic writings. For that is the ſtandard to which all opinions upon this ſubject muſt be ultimately referred.

From theſe writings, principally, we have collected what appears to us deciſive evidence reſpecting the nature, deſign, and conſtitution, of the Chriſtian

church. Upon the authority of theſe writings, we have deſcribed the church to be, not a creature of the imagination, or a ſociety of human eſtabliſhment; but a viſible body of people called out of the world by GOD, and placed by Him under a particular form of government and diſcipline, calculated to promote the great object for which they are brought together. By direct evidence from the ſame fountain of knowledge, we have maintained, that the Head of the church originally committed the care of it to his Apoſtles, inveſting them with power to manage the concerns of it; and that the Apoſtles did actually exerciſe that power, by appointing divers orders in the church, and eſtabliſhing the plan upon which it was in future to be conducted. In correſpondence with this arrangement, we have repreſented the unity of the church to conſiſt in the conformity of its members to this Divine plan; whereby they become joined together in that brotherly communion and fellowſhip, neceſſary to the promotion of that charity, which is "the bond of perfectneſs," and the characteriſtic mark of the diſciples of the bleſſed JESUS.

It now remains that the reader examine this matter for himſelf. With his Bible in his hand, and prejudice laid aſide, let the ſubject then be brought to

an impartial hearing. And if he find, as we are perſuaded will be the caſe, that thoſe parts of the ſacred records, to which an appeal has been made in the foregoing diſcourſes, will not, upon fair conſtruction, admit a ſenſe different from what has been annexed to them; if he would maintain the character of an honeſt man, he will be led to the following obvious concluſion: that a fancied independence on ſpiritual authority, upon the miſtaken idea, that every man is at liberty to make his own church; or to join himſelf to any ſociety of Chriſtians who may aſſume that name, with the view of offering up a more ſpiritual ſervice than, in their judgment, is offered to GOD in any other way, the plauſible ground upon which all modern ſeparations from the church are built; whilſt it renders the Apoſtolic writings deſtitute of all force and meaning, tends at the ſame time to the diſſolution of that order, which CHRIST, for wiſe reaſons, ſaw neceſſary to be eſtabliſhed.

In handling this ſubject, we have laid down two general poſitions; which, it is preſumed, are not to be controverted. The firſt is, that the Author of man's ſalvation was beſt qualified to determine the plan calculated to carry it into effect. The ſecond, that as the ſalvation of fallen man is the work of

free and undeſerved grace, man muſt be thankful to accept it on the conditions upon which it is offered. The concluſion to which theſe poſitions lead, ſeems to be this: that no man, in the *ordinary way* of ſalvation, can hope to attain the end of his Chriſtian calling, who neglects to uſe the means appointed by GOD to lead him to it.

Such is the ground upon which the argument for conformity to the church is built. The conſideration that a certain plan has been ſet on foot, and certain means of grace appointed by the Head of the church, for the purpoſe of ſecuring the ſalvation of its members, tends to render that argument concluſive. For, as it has been already obſerved, though perhaps in different words, the ſpiritual life of man muſt depend upon his ſpiritual connection with CHRIST. "The branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine." But the only *revealed* way that CHRIST has appointed for man's obtaining this ſpiritual connection with him, is by becoming a member of his body, the church. "By one ſpirit (ſays the Apoſtle) we are all baptized into one body;" by one and the ſame ſpirit, communicated to us at baptiſm, we are united into one ſpiritual ſociety, the church; and "have been all made to drink into one ſpirit:" our

ſpiritual life, as members of CHRIST's body, being preſerved to us by our communication with the head of it, JESUS CHRIST; in the uſe of thoſe means of grace appointed by Him for that purpoſe; upon the principle laid down by our SAVIOUR himſelf in this ſhort though comprehenſive axiom, "that without Him we can do nothing."

Hence we have been led to point out the apparent danger of ſeparating from the unity of the church. For, if we reaſon from analogy, as, from the figure under which ST. PAUL has deſcribed the church, we are obviouſly led to do, we ſhall reaſon thus: that by ſeparating from the body of which CHRIST is the head, we ſeparate from that ſpirit which animates it. And if we become partakers of CHRIST's ſpirit, in conſequence of being admitted members of his church, which the ſcripture has given us to underſtand, (Acts ii. 38) the continuance of that ſpirit with us muſt, it ſhould ſeem, depend upon our remaining in that connection with Him, which firſt qualified us for its reception.

We read but of *one* body and *one* ſpirit, Epheſ. iv. 4. From whence we are led to conclude, that the ſpirit of CHRIST is confined to that body of which he is the head; and that body is the church. A

ſeparation from the church conſequently, according to the meaning deſigned to be conveyed by the Apoſtle, muſt be regarded as a kind of ſpiritual death.

From what has been ſaid at large upon this ſubject, our object has been to enable the reader to underſtand the figurative language of the Apoſtle, conſidered as deſcriptive of the myſtical body of CHRIST; the members of which are joined together, and animated by the ſame ſpirit, derived to them from their participation in thoſe life-giving ſacraments, which CHRIST appointed as the means of forming and preſerving to himſelf a church upon earth. The Apoſtolic language thus interpreted furniſhes a clear and diſtinct notion of the Chriſtian church in its original and perfect form; of which the joint communion of its component members conſtitutes an eſſential characteriſtic. If we have been tediouſly particular on this point, it has been from a conviction, that a want of proper information upon it has been the cauſe of many well-meaning people going out of the church, who might otherwiſe have gladly remained in it. For their ſakes, therefore, I ſtill feel diſpoſed to ſay ſome few words on a ſubject, which, from its connection with that in which we are immediately engaged, ſeems to claim ſome attention.

Separation from the church originates, it is to be feared, for the moſt part, in pride; although it is, generally ſpeaking, attempted to be juſtified by the imaginary plea of ſuperior advantage, derivable from an attendance upon religious worſhip in ſome other place. Should I be thought wanting in charity in this caſe, I muſt take ſhelter, under the authority of a moſt judicious writer of the laſt century,* whoſe remark upon this ſubject poſſeſſes that ſterling value, which muſt give it currency in every age. "What harm ſoever" (ſays he) "in private families there groweth, by diſobedience of children, ſtubbornneſs in ſervants, untractableneſs in them who, although they otherwiſe may rule, yet ſhould, in conſideration of the imparity of their ſex, be alſo ſubject; whatſoever by ſtrife among men combined in greater ſocieties, by tyranny of potentates, ambition of nobles, rebellion of ſubjects in civil ſtates; by hereſies, ſchiſms, and diviſions in the church; naming *pride*, we name the mother that brought them forth, and the only nurſe that feedeth them. Give me the hearts of all men humbled, and what is there that can overthrow or diſturb the peace of the world, where many things are the cauſe of much evil, but *pride* of all?" With-

* HOOKER's Sermon on Pride.

out, however, particularly inſiſting on the cauſe of ſeparation from the church, (as we would always, ignorant as we are of the human heart, ſpeak with diffidence, when we argue from the appearance of an external act, to the exiſtence of an internal principle;) it will be more to our purpoſe to attend to the conſequences derivable from it. And under this head, we cannot help remarking the unſound ground, upon which a prevailing idea reſpecting the Divine aſſiſtance is commonly built.

In the church, we look for the *ordinary* aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit in the regular and ſincere uſe of the means of grace appointed to convey it. The Divine promiſe encourages us ſo to do. Provided, therefore, we do not deceive ourſelves in this matter, we certainly ſhall not be diſappointed in our expectation. Separatiſts from the church, are frequently taught to expect the *extraordinary* aſſiſtance of the ſame Divine ſpirit, independent of all appointed means whatever. For the ſupport of this expectation there is no authority, either from ſcripture or reaſon, to be produced. We are not ſurpriſed, therefore, that to minds engroſſed with ſuch an idea, all ſtated ſervices of religion ſhould appear in the light of uſeleſs forms, and beggarly elements; beneath the attention

of thoſe who are favoured with a more immediate communication from the Divine Fountain. But to prove the abſurdity of this idea, conſidered as eſtabliſhing the ground for a general poſition, and at the ſame time to ſet aſide all pretenſions to ſuch extraordinary aſſiſtance, it requires only to be remarked, for what purpoſe that aſſiſtance was originally granted, and to what end it was employed.

"I will pray the Father," ſaid CHRIST to his diſciples, a little before his departure from them, as we read in ST. JOHN's Goſpel, "and he ſhall ſend you another *comforter*,* that he may abide with you for ever, even the ſpirit of truth." In another part of his writings the ſame Apoſtle tells us, that "if we ſin, we have an *advocate* with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous." From the Apoſtle's application of the ſame word to the Holy Ghoſt in the former text, which he has applied to our SAVIOUR in the latter; and ſince the word thus applied to our SAVIOUR muſt be tranſlated as it is, to make good the Apoſtle's meaning upon the occaſion, it is to be concluded, that by this common uſe of the ſame term, the Apoſtle intended thereby to convey an idea of

* The original word, tranſlated *Comforter* and *Advocate*, in theſe two different parts of ST. JOHN's writings, is the ſame.

ſome ſimilarity exiſting between the office of the reſpective parties; conſequently, that both theſe Divine perſons were, in ſome ſenſe, to be conſidered *advocates* for mankind.

Now the office of an *advocate* is, to ſupport or defend a cauſe; to appear in behalf of another, to plead for him, or manage his concerns. Whilſt, therefore, we have an *advocate*, JESUS CHRIST the righteous, who appears in our cauſe before the Father in Heaven; we have alſo *another advocate* on earth, who undertakes the cauſe of the church againſt its ſpiritual enemies; providing the members of it, from time to time, with ſuch aſſiſtance, as may enable them to carry on their warfare againſt them with ſucceſs. To the care and management of this powerful advocate, our bleſſed SAVIOUR, when he left the world, committed his church; that he might continue with it, as its patron and ſupport, to the end of time. The method adopted by this Divine Advocate, in the management of his great concern, at the commencement of his office, is, what is now meant to be pointed out to immediate attention.

At the firſt eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian church, a great and important reformation, both in principles and practices, was to be effected. The cauſe of

JESUS CHRIST was to be juſtified; the prince of this world was to be judged; the idols of heatheniſh ſuperſtition was to be thrown down; and the religion of a crucified SAVIOUR propagated. The inſtruments pitched upon by Divine wiſdom for carrying this great work into effect, were men, for the moſt part, of the loweſt order and meaneſt endowments; and conſequently men, humanly ſpeaking, the leaſt qualified for the undertaking; eſpecially when it is conſidered, that on the other ſide all the powers of earth and hell were combined againſt them.

Theſe extraordinary circumſtances, under which the church of CHRIST firſt appeared in the world, required *extraordinary* aſſiſtance from heaven, for the ſupport of a cauſe in itſelf ſo apparently weak. To furniſh this aſſiſtance, by diſtributing thoſe gifts which JESUS CHRIST, when he aſcended up on high, had received for men, Pſ. lxviii. 18, was the peculiar office of the Holy Ghoſt. The manner in which that office was diſcharged, according to the exigence of the occaſion, the Apoſtle has particularly deſcribed in the twelfth chapter of the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians; where he gives a detail of the ſeveral gifts and powers, which were conferred on the firſt Chriſtians, to give weight and credibility to their

doctrine, and to ſupport an infant, ſtruggling cauſe againſt that oppoſition which was then ſo powerfully exerted againſt it. Among theſe gifts we find that of divers tongues; a gift abſolutely neceſſary, to ſupply the defects of an incompetent education, and to qualify illiterate men for the immediate diſcharge of an office, which, according to the commiſſion delivered to them, was "to go and make diſciples in all nations."

But the Apoſtles were not only to preach and propagate the religion of a crucified JESUS, but were, moreover, to leave behind them a ſtanding revelation for the future direction and government of the church. To enable them to collect the materials for this work, from the detached converſation of their bleſſed Maſter, and the incidental circumſtances of his life, with a correctneſs eſſential to its perfection, *extraordinary* aſſiſtance was deemed neceſſary. One part, therefore, of the Holy Ghoſt's office, as *advocate* for the church, was to qualify the Apoſtles for this undertaking; by "leading them into all truth; and bringing all things to their remembrance which JESUS had ſaid unto them." John xiv. 25, 26. By this *ſupernatural* aſſiſtance, ignorance and error were effectually guarded againſt; and every truth expe-

dient to be known was delivered to the world, with that authority and conviction, proper to accompany a revelation, deſigned to be the ſtandard of Chriſtian faith to all future ages.

To thoſe, therefore, who in theſe days deſpiſe the ordinary means of attaining divine knowledge, from a dependence upon that *extraordinary* aſſiſtance from the Holy Spirit, which was vouchſafed to the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, we have to obſerve; that the ſtate of the Chriſtian world does not at this time render ſuch aſſiſtance neceſſary. The ſtandard of Chriſtian faith being fixed, we have no new revelation to expect. It remains only, that we now make ourſelves acquainted with that which has been vouchſafed unto us; and this is to be done by the uſual methods of ſtudy and application, accompanied with that ordinary aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, which we are taught to believe will accompany all ſincere endeavours exerted in ſuch a cauſe.

The church ſtands no longer upon that ground on which it originally ſtood, when the weak things of the world and the fooliſh th ings were choſen to confound the wiſe. Kings and Queens are now become her nurſing fathers and nurſing mothers; and the wiſdom of the wiſe is now engaged in her cauſe.

The ſigns and wonders, which accompanied the preaching of the Goſpel in its early days, have therefore ceaſed; becauſe the end for which they were granted having been anſwered, the continuance of them is no longer neceſſary. For a ſimilar reaſon, all the *extraordinary* aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit to qualify the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity for their office, by the effect of immediate inſpiration ſupplying natural incapacity, has long ſince ceaſed; becauſe men have it now in their power, in a great degree, to qualify themſelves for the diſcharge of the miniſterial office by a proper employment of thoſe faculties which GOD has given them for the purpoſe.

As much important work was to be completed within a ſhort period, the whole world being to be converted by the Apoſtles and their immediate deputies to the knowledge of the true GOD, ſuch means were neceſſary as would tend to give a ready reception to their preaching, by producing a powerful and inſtantaneous effect upon their hearers. Miracles were expreſsly calculated for this purpoſe. And had the ſtate of the church ſtill continued to be what it was when the Holy Ghoſt firſt undertook the charge of it, the ſame *extraordinary* means would ſtill have been neceſſary for its ſupport. But in propor-

tion as the *ordinary* means of promoting Chriſtian knowledge increaſed upon the world, *extraordinary* means were withdrawn; and the external evidence for the credibility of the Goſpel, from the ſigns and wonders which attended its early promulgation, gradually gave way to that internal evidence, which the ſtudy of the ſacred writings, when put into the hands of Chriſtians, was calculated to furniſh; an evidence which, though leſs quick in its operation than what acts upon the underſtanding through the medium of the ſenſes, has yet this advantage in its favour, that it is more permanent in its effect.

Whilſt, therefore, the ſober Chriſtian looks for that aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit which is ſtill neceſſary for his condition, to enable him to "fight the good fight of faith," and which he certainly will obtain, provided he do not aſk amiſs; he does not expect to receive aſſiſtance which the circumſtances of his caſe do not require.

Should extraordinary events take place in the Chriſtian world, he reſts aſſured, from the experience of former times, that the ſame Holy Spirit who "divideth to every man ſeverally as he will," and to whoſe truſt the ſpiritual concerns of Chriſtians have been committed, will not be wanting to the occaſion.

A diſtinction is, therefore, to be made between the *ordinary* and *extraordinary* aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit; each being adapted by Divine wiſdom to the particular condition of the party concerned. In the preſent day, the extraordinary aſſiſtance which attended the infant church is not expected, becauſe it is not wanted. That it is not granted, can be no ſubject for controverſy; whilſt thoſe who pretend to it, are unable to produce a proof of it. They neither work miracles, nor do they poſſeſs the gift of tongues; though from a want of knowledge of the languages in which the Scriptures were originally written, they are frequently leading their hearers into error; which certainly they would not be permitted to do, if, like the Apoſtles, they were, as they pretend to be, under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit.

All pretence, therefore, to this *extraordinary* aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, which tends to ſuperſede the uſe of thoſe general methods of attaining Divine knowledge, which are ſuited to the preſent ſtate of things in the world, and calculated to eſtabliſh the faith and practice of the Chriſtian profeſſor on the firm ground of ſound argument and rational conviction, is the offspring of enthuſiaſm; which has been productive of more diſgrace to the Chriſtian cauſe,

and more miſchief to mankind, than almoſt any principle that has ever actuated the human mind. And it is from a want of a proper diſtinction having been made between the effects of the Holy Spirit, which were peculiar to the Apoſtolic age, and thoſe which a change of circumſtances render ſtill neceſſary to be continued in the church, that all the miſtakes upon this ſubject have ariſen.

A conſideration, which ſpeaks a language ſufficiently intelligible to every diſcriminating mind, in favour of that rational and edifying form of worſhip eſtabliſhed in our church, as beſt calculated to form that temper of ſober piety and ſolid virtue, which never fails to produce correſpondent effects upon the practice of all who ſincerely uſe it. Eſpecially when it is obſerved, as in truth and juſtice it ought to be, that moſt of the errors which have crept into the church are to be traced up to the ignorance and incapacity of thoſe, who from time to time have deemed themſelves qualified to be interpreters of holy writ.

In proof of the foregoing poſition, it may be ſufficient for our preſent purpoſe to produce one inſtance. The original commiſſion delivered to the Apoſtles, as it ſtands recorded in St. Matthew's Goſpel, runs thus: "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you," &c. From the letter of this commiſſion, as it ſtands in our tranſlation, a concluſion has been drawn by ſome, that a previous acquaintance with the principles of Chriſtianity is a neceſſary qualification for admiſſion into the Chriſtian church; and that infants, in conſequence of their incapacity to learn, are of courſe excluded from that privilege. But had the early patrons of this erroneous opinion in this country been acquainted with the original* language, in which this Apoſtolic commiſſion was firſt delivered to the world, they would have been ſatisfied, that a concluſion, the very oppoſite to the one drawn by them, is what the paſſage in queſtion ſeems deſigned to point out. In proof of this poſition, it is to be obſerved, that the words *teach* and *teaching*, which occur in this remarkable paſſage, are in the *original* Greek expreſſed by two words, conveying two different meanings. In conformity with which, the commiſſion in queſtion

* The Goſpel according to St. Matthew was originally written by him in Hebrew, for the benefit of the Jews at Jeruſalem; but afterwards tranſlated by him, or ſome apoſtolical perſon, into Greek, and in that language received into the canon of the New Teſtament by the whole primitive church.

may with propriety be read thus: "Go ye, and make diſciples of all nations, baptizing them, &c.; and when admitted into the church by baptiſm, teach them to obſerve all things," &c. Children, therefore, are admitted into a ſtate of diſcipleſhip in the church, or ſchool, of CHRIST, upon the ſame idea that they are admitted into that ſtate in any other ſchool; not becauſe they have been already taught, but in order that they may learn. In confirmation of the foregoing remark, it may be obſerved, that in the Eaſtern churches, where the Goſpel of St. MATTHEW was read in the *Greek* language, the erroneous opinion here alluded to, reſpecting the incapacity of infants for admiſſion into the church by baptiſm, never prevailed.

Another text which has been preſſed into the ſame ſervice, by the patrons of this erroneous opinion, will alſo be found unequal to the weight that has been attempted to be laid upon it. "Except a man be born of water and of the ſpirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD." John iii. 5. But in the original it is, "except a *perſon*, *any one* be born," &c. a term of general import, and applicable, conſequently, to all ages and perſons, to *man*, *woman*, and *child*. I have thought it neceſſary to point out

theſe two paſſages of ſcripture to notice, with the view of ſhewing the reader the narrow ground upon which the objection to infant baptiſm originally ſtood. The arguments ſince drawn from ſome other circumſtances recorded in holy writ in ſupport of it, have been brought forward to prop up a feeble cauſe, which its zealous advocates having once eſpouſed have thought themſelves obliged, at all events, to maintain. Whilſt, on the other ſide, is to be placed that momentous conſideration reſpecting the religious education of children, which reaſon, experience, and ſcripture, uniformly recommend to parental attention.

Reaſon tells us, that if a plant be diſpoſed in its infant ſtate to take an untoward growth, early training is the only mode calculated to correct the natural tendency. What this plant is in the *phyſical*, man is in the *moral* world; a being who, from the corruption of his nature, is diſpoſed to evil. Vicious affections, like noxious weeds, are the natural produce of the human ſoil; which will of courſe ripen into maturity, if early pains be not taken to eradicate them, and plant in their room thoſe graces of the Chriſtian temper, which as they are exotics in the ſoil of the human heart, require, in order to their being preſerved in health and vigour, early nurſing, conſtant

ſuperintendance, and aſſiduous care. The royal inſtructor, therefore, in his directions to "train up a child in the way that he ſhould go," ſpake the language of ſound wiſdom; of a man acquainted with the actual ſtate of human nature, and ſolicitous of providing the only remedy, under GOD, againſt its prevailing corruption.

The experience of mankind informs us, that the welfare, we might ſay the exiſtence, of civilized ſociety, in a great meaſure depends upon the proper diſcharge of the parental duty. And with reſpect to religious education in particular, the Jewiſh hiſtorian informs us, that there were never leſs among the Jews than four hundred houſes of catechizing, where the law and the Talmud were regularly expounded; and, moreover, that there was an act made at Jeruſalem, which obliged all children of a certain age to attend, in conformity with that poſitive injunction which accompanied the delivery of the law, and is thus recorded for our admonition: "The words which I command thee this day ſhall be in thine heart; and thou ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up."*

* DEUT. xi. 19.

It ſeems almoſt unneceſſary to add, that the contrary practice which prevails with many parents, in conſequence of their having taken up an erroneous opinion reſpecting infant baptiſm, of leaving their children as it were to their own training, in expectation of an extraordinary call from the Spirit, when their day of converſion ſhall arrive; has been the moſt ruinous to the Chriſtian cauſe, and the moſt advantageous to that of its grand enemy, that ever could proceed from the human mind. A practice, which, were it to become general, would prove the moſt effectual mean, not only of baniſhing Chriſtianity from the world, but of reducing the inhabitants of it to a wild ſtate of nature, that could poſſibly be deviſed. A conſideration, which muſt powerfully enforce itſelf upon the mind of every parent, who regards the welfare of his own children; who has formed any idea of his own duty; who has remarked, what his Bible teaches him to do, the great attention that was paid to children under the Jewiſh diſpenſation; and has, for a moment, conſidered, that one of the reaſons given by GOD himſelf for the particular favour with which He was pleaſed to diſtinguiſh ABRAHAM, is thus expreſſed, Gen. xviii. "For I know

him," ſays GOD, "that he will command his children and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the LORD."

There is one point more, upon which it may be proper to add a ſhort word, by way of obviating an objection very commonly made againſt the ſervice of our church, by thoſe who are either unpoſſeſſed of candour or diſcrimination.

When the church of England firſt emancipated herſelf from the ſhackles of the Romiſh worſhip, it was not to be wondered at, that ſome Proteſtants, with more zeal than judgment, ſhould entertain a jealouſy of forms and ceremonies, as tending to preſerve the veſtiges of that idolatry which they had wiſely renounced. But had they conſidered, that the divines, who ſcrupled not to uſe thoſe forms and ceremonies, which were judged expedient to be retained in our church, were ſome of the moſt powerful advocates the Proteſtant cauſe ever had, they would in candour have concluded, that the objection to forms and ceremonies muſt chiefly depend upon the idea with which they are accompanied in the mind of the party engaged in them; and that, conſequently, they may be not only very innocent, but very advantageous aſſiſtances to religious worſhip.

Forms, conſidered merely in themſelves, are but the outſide of religion; and if they lead to nothing beyond that, it matters not in what place they are practiſed, or by whom. Thus far all rational men readily agree. Their diſagreement conſiſts in this: ſome men reject forms, from a remembrance of their paſt abuſe; whilſt others more wiſely determine, that the advantage they are calculated to produce, ought not to be ſacrificed to the evil which, through the corruption of human nature, may occaſionally be derived from them. And this determination is certainly beſt ſuited to the ſtate of the party concerned.

Man is a being compounded of ſoul and body; his religion, therefore, muſt be ſuited to his circumſtances. That muſt alſo have a ſoul and body, a ſpiritual and a corporal part; upon the proper union of which two parts, the ſpiritual life of its profeſſor will, upon experience, be found to depend. For certain it is, that religion may be too refined for the preſent groſs ſtate of the human underſtanding; which muſt receive much of its information on divine ſubjects through a ſenſible medium. Hence the language of the Bible is, for the moſt part, a language of *ſimilitudes*; the eye of ſenſe being made to miniſter to the eye of the underſtanding; natural and viſible

objects being employed to convey to the mind those ideas, which it is not in a condition to receive in any other way.

Correspondent with this figurative language of scripture, are the forms or figurative services which have been introduced into religious worship. They are designed to minister to a similar purpose; namely, to inform the understanding, and, at the same time, to awaken and keep alive the attention to those spiritual subjects, which might otherwise make little or no impression. Taken in this light, they may be considered as a sort of explanatory appendages to religious worship; and if made that use of for which they were appointed, must, in a great degree, tend to the spiritual advantage of the parties engaged in them.

On this account they have made a part of every religion, true as well as false, that has appeared in the world. The Jewish religion, that peculiar dispensation of GOD, abounded with them; from which our SAVIOUR selected those which were adapted to the Christian institution. From whence the conclusion is, that forms have always been deemed necessary to the support of religion in every age.

Abuſes there have been, and always will be, in a buſineſs in which man is concerned. The Jew, in our SAVIOUR's day, was a ſcrupulous obſerver of forms, whilſt he knew nothing of the ſpirit to which they were deſigned to lead. "He waſhed diligently the outſide of the platter," whilſt the inſide was ſuffered to remain unclean.

The Roman Catholic, who regulates his religious ſervice by his bead-roll, is in a ſomewhat ſimilar condition. And ſo is every member of our communion, who ſubſtitutes the *form* of godlineſs for the *power* of it.

The object of true religion has been at all times the ſame; namely, to make man a ſpiritual being. So far as forms contribute to this purpoſe, and from their impreſſion upon the mind they contribute greatly to it, they are an eſſential part of religion.

But there are two extremes in this caſe, between which the line of the wiſe man's conduct will be carefully drawn; from a conviction, that the abuſe and neglect of forms tend nearly in an equal degree to defeat the deſired purpoſe; the one leading as certainly to ſuperſtition and hypocriſy, as the other does to irreligion and prophaneneſs. A conſideration, which, it may be hoped, will give additional weight

to what has been ſaid in a former diſcourſe upon the advantages attendant upon communion with our church; the forms of which are neither ſo multiplied as to engroſs the attention, nor yet ſo inſignificant as not to convey a ſufficiently inſtructive meaning to the mind of the worſhipper. Indeed, if any church has been ſo judicious, as to keep the golden mean between loading the ſervice of GOD with external forms on the one hand, and ſtripping it ſo bare on the other, as not to leave ſufficient for the purpoſes of bodily worſhip and mental contemplation, the Church of England may juſtly lay claim to this diſtinction. And he who perſuades himſelf that religion is to be preſerved in the world without forms, makes himſelf wiſer than GOD; at the ſame time that he manifeſts his ignorance of the nature and character of man.

The general view of the ſubject, which has been here laid before the reader, is deſigned to lead him to the conſideration of his own particular caſe.

The eſtabliſhed church of this kingdom is a branch of the church of CHRIST. The congregation to which ſome Chriſtians are joined, is a manifeſt ſeparation from it. The teachers to whoſe care they have committed themſelves, own no relation to that ſpiri-

tual ſociety, to which all Chriſtians ought to be united. To make uſe, then, of the language of the primitive church, here is altar ſet up againſt altar, and paſtor againſt paſtor. From whence it follows, that if there ever were ſuch a ſin as that of *ſchiſm*, in any age of the Chriſtian church, it is now to be found among us. It behoves thoſe, therefore, whom it may concern, to take this ſubject into ſerious conſideration. Should our church require any terms of communion with which they are perſuaded they ought not to comply, ſo long as that perſuaſion laſts, their ſeparation from the church ought to continue. But it muſt be remembered at the ſame time, that their perſuaſion in this caſe will be their juſtification in the ſight of GOD, in proportion only as it has been built upon *rational* and *conſcientious* conviction. Should it have been taken up with paſſion or prejudice, or adopted without examination; and ſhould any means of information have been neglected, which might have been made uſe of for the direction of their judgment, their error in this caſe will be their ſin, becauſe it has been derived from their neglect; and their conſequent ſeparation from the church will be alſo a ſin; for one ſin will not be permitted to be pleaded in excuſe for another.

Let me intreat ſuch Chriſtians, then, to examine fairly the ground upon which their ſeparation ſtands. Let the objections which they have to communion with our church be brought to a fair trial; laying aſide every prejudice, not being too wiſe in their own conceits, but adviſing with thoſe who are better qualified to judge than themſelves, and from whom they have a right to expect light and direction: remembering, that the Chriſtian miniſtry was inſtituted for the very purpoſe of preventing Chriſtians "being carried to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; and that profeſſing the faith in the unity of the ſpirit, and in the bond of peace, they might be edified in truth and love."

Having thus brought to recollection the principal deſign of the foregoing Diſcourſes; which was to furniſh that uniform and conſiſtent notion of the nature, deſign, and conſtitution, of the Chriſtian church, which might qualify the reader to judge of the conſequences attendant upon a wilful ſeparation from it, I haſten to a concluſion; craving time only to preſs that part of the ſubject upon his mind, which it was one object of the eſtabliſhment of CHRIST's church upon earth to promote; namely, that whilſt men with one mind

and one mouth glorified GOD, their communication with each other in the ſame acts of religious worſhip, might form a bond of Chriſtian fellowſhip, effectual for the ſecurity of peace and good-will among themſelves.

It was a remark long ſince made by a learned writer, that the ſame fate (if the expreſſion may be admitted) has attended the Chriſtian, which of old attended the Jewiſh, religion. The great commandment, which conſtituted the foundation and principal characteriſtic of the Jewiſh religion was, that the Iſraelites ſhould worſhip the LORD their GOD, and that to Him only their ſervice ſhould be dedicated. But, alas! this was the commandment which they were moſt diſpoſed to break; idolatry being that prevailing ſin of the Jewiſh people, to reclaim them from which all the methods of Divine Providence proved for a long time ineffectual.

Charity, or a diſpoſition to peace and unity, is the ſecond great commandment of the Goſpel, and a principal characteriſtic of the Chriſtian religon. "By this ſhall all men know," ſays CHRIST, "that ye are *my diſciples*, if ye have love one to another." But of all the commandments obligatory upon the Chriſtian profeſſor, this, perhaps, is the one to which leaſt attention has been paid. Indeed, through the num-

berleſs diviſions which have unhappily taken place among Chriſtians, and that alienation of mind from each other conſequent thereupon, it is a commandment which ſeems almoſt entirely to have loſt its force. Hence it has happened, that Chriſtians, ſo called, have too frequently borne no reſemblance to that amiable character, by which, in conformity with the Goſpel ſtandard of perfection, they ought to be diſtinguiſhed.

The firſt and great deſign of Chriſtianity was to reconcile man to GOD; the ſecond, to reconcile men to each other.

If then we are right in our principle, that one object which the Friend of fallen man had in view in the eſtabliſhment of his church upon earth was, to promote peace and good-will, by engaging the members of it in the uniform and ſocial purſuit of the ſame intereſting concern; we ſhall not be wrong in our concluſion, that the cauſe which has produced an effect ſo contrary to this benevolent object, muſt proceed from the very oppoſite quarter; and that the grand enemy of man, conſequently, is the parent of diviſion. "The greatneſs of GOD," as a ſound writer* of our church has well expreſſed himſelf, "is meaſured by his goodneſs; his power is exerciſed in communicating

* W. JONES.

light and comfort. He openeth his hand, and the whole creation partakes of his bounty. Being perfect in love and beneficence, He is therefore perfect in greatneſs. But look on the other hand, and you will find that miſchief diſtinguiſhes the power of SATAN: his greatneſs conſiſts wholly in croſſing the merciful plan of redemption, and counteracting the Divine benevolence; the propagation of diſcord and diſorder is neceſſary to the keeping up of his grandeur, and to the increaſe of his kingdom."

This conſideration accounts for the frequent and urgent exhortations to peace and unity, to be met with in the ſacred writings; as conſtituting a grand hinge, upon which the ſucceſs of the Chriſtian ſcheme muſt, in a great meaſure, be expected to turn. Upon this idea the GOD of Chriſtians is repreſented as a GOD of peace and love, and his example ſet forth as a pattern for man's imitation. "Beloved," ſays the Apoſtle, "if GOD ſo loved us, in ſending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him, we ought alſo to love one another. And hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us;" in other words, "that we are Chriſtians, becauſe He hath given us of his ſpirit," 1 John iv. 11, &c.

Upon the ſame idea, the kingdom of CHRIST, which is his church, is deſcribed to be "righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghoſt."

To qualify men for a ſtate of memberſhip in this ſpiritual kingdom, they are required to "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Rom. xiv. 19. "As much as lieth in them to live peaceably with all men." Rom. xii. 18. "To be of one mind, to live in peace, and the GOD of peace ſhall be with them." 2 Cor. xiii. 11. "Finally, my brethren," ſays the Apoſtle, in proſecution of the ſame Divine idea, "if there be any conſolation in CHRIST, any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the ſpirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy; that ye be like minded, having the ſame love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through ſtrife or vain-glory; but in lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem others better than themſelves." Phil. ii. 1, &c. And as "there is one body and one ſpirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing each other in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace."*

* Epheſ. iv. 2.

From hence it appears, that the religion of CHRIST is a religion of *ſenſibilities*, no leſs than of *motives*. It teaches us, after the example of that bleſſed Perſon who felt for all men, to take a lively intereſt in the concerns of our fellow-creatures; to rejoice with them in proſperity, and ſympathize with them in diſtreſs; and treading in the ſteps of Him who went about continually doing good, to abound in the labours of Chriſtian benevolence; in the words of the Apoſtle, "to be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; to be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST's ſake hath forgiven us." Rom. xii. 10. The foregoing picture of Chriſtianity, though but partially drawn, furniſhes a powerful argument in favour of that plan, which places man in a condition beſt calculated to promote this great object of his Chriſtian profeſſion.

Upon the ſuppoſition, then, that there was no Divine inſtitution in this caſe, which claimed obedience on the part of man; and the mode of religious worſhip, as a matter of perfect indifference, was left to the arbitrary diſcretion of every individual engaged in it; the plan which GOD has graciouſly marked out for men, by incorporating them into one body or ſociety under regular government,

in conſequence of which they became neceſſarily joined together by that ſimilarity of condition and intereſt, and that uſe of the ſame appointed means for the promotion of their general concern, which muſt, from the conſtitution of human nature, be productive of mutual regard and mutual aſſiſtance; would be the plan, which, if propoſed to him by his fellow-creatures, every thinking Chriſtian, it might be ſuppoſed, would readily adopt.

Let not, then, this plan of *ſocial religion* be neglected, or thought lightly of, becauſe it has been projected by that all-wiſe Being, who, from knowing what was in man, not only knew how beſt to provide for the circumſtances of the party for whoſe ſervice it was eſtabliſhed, but who, from the relation in which man ſtands to Him, has a right to exact his obedience to it. Rather let us with gratitude avail ourſelves of that aſſiſtance, which the eſtabliſhment of the church upon earth miniſters to our condition; and not ſacrifice that good, which it is ſo well calculated to produce, to vain dreams of more ſpiritual perfection, in ways of our own deviſing.

"The firſt bleſſing that I daily beg of my GOD for his church (ſaid that pious and affectionate biſhop,* whoſe character the Chriſtian is only at a

* Biſhop HALL.

loſs whether moſt to love or admire) is, our SAVIOUR's legacy, *peace;* that ſweet peace, which in the very name of it comprehends all happineſs both of eſtate and diſpoſition. Other graces are for the beauty of the church; *this* for the health and life of it. No marvel then, if the church, labouring here below, make it her daily ſuit to her glorious bridegroom in heaven: "Give peace in our time, O LORD." And would to GOD, that the united voice of Chriſtians, of every denomination, might be heard joining in the charitable petition, "Give peace in our time, O LORD; that peace which paſſeth all underſtanding."

But diviſion, we all know, cannot lead to unity and peace. Diviſion, therefore, muſt in its nature be hoſtile to one great object of the Chriſtian religion. As ſuch, it muſt be ſcrupulouſly avoided by every man, who would co-operate with GOD in the reſtoration of his fallen nature.

It is the employment of the Chriſtian's life to be gradually changed into the image of his Divine Maſter; that "the ſame mind," ſo far as human infirmity will permit, "may be in him, which was in CHRIST JESUS: and the hope which he entertains, will be always proportionate to the degree of

reſemblance, which is to be traced between him and his Divine pattern.

When Chriſtians, therefore, regard the Church as their common mother, and themſelves as brethren, travelling in fellowſhip through the wilderneſs of this world to their promiſed land; they will not, by petty diſputes on the road, expoſe themſelves to the attacks of their ſurrounding enemies: but, the grand object in view ſwallowing up every other conſideration, all differences of opinion will give way to the cultivation of that temper, neceſſary to qualify them for the enjoyment of the bleſſed country towards which their courſe is directed.

In ſuch caſe, the golden age of the primitive church would return upon us; and the proverb, deſcriptive of the amiable character of its early members, "ſee how theſe Chriſtians love one another," would again be realized. Such an event, rather to be wiſhed for in theſe days than expected, would bring in the accompliſhment of the glorious promiſes, which in the ſpirit of prophecy have been made to the church—"when the wolf ſhall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child ſhall lead them;" when

"Ephraim ſhall no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim;" and there ſhall be no more conſuming or devouring in all GOD's holy mountain.

O thou Prince of Peace, and Friend of fallen man! who purchaſed the church with thine own blood; heal the breaches of it, we beſeech thee, by the communication of thy grace to all its members; prepare them for that more perfect ſtate of thy kingdom, to which they are taught to look forward; by giving them an heart capable of receiving all thoſe impreſſions, which thy religion was deſigned to make upon it, that thoſe who hold faſt the faith of thy Goſpel, may alſo poſſeſs the ſpirit of it: to this end, fix in the mind of every Chriſtian profeſſor this important truth, that charity, or a diſpoſition to peace and unity, is that bond of perfectneſs, without which no man, be his other pretenſions what they may, can be qualified for admiſſion into that holy place, from whence diſcord and diviſion will be for ever excluded, and where nothing will be heard, but the grateful ſounds of harmony and love. Even ſo, bleſſed JESUS, for thy church's ſake. Amen.

POSTSCRIPT;

To those Members of the CHURCH, *who occasionally frequent other Places of Public Worship.*

OCCASIONAL Separation from the church ſtands, in point of argument, on the ſame ground with *occaſional conformity* to it. If conformity to the church be a ſin againſt the conſcience of the party, which was the plea originally ſet up by thoſe who ſeparated from it in this country, every act of occaſional conformity, being a commiſſion of that ſin, muſt be ſubject to condemnation.

If *ſchiſm*, or a wilful ſeparation from the church, be in itſelf a ſin, as from the authority of ſcripture and the primitive writers of the church it is adjudged to be; every occaſional ſeparation from it muſt be ſeen in a ſimilar point of view. It is a commiſſion of an acknowledged ſin; and the only difference between

the *conſtant* ſeparatiſt and the *occaſional* one appears to be, that the one continues in the habitual practice of that ſin, which the other occaſionally commits.

Now the ſin of ſchiſm conſiſts, as we have already obſerved, in a wilful and needleſs ſeparation from the communion of the church. And the church, as we underſtand the term, is that body or regular ſociety of Chriſtians aſſembled together under the form of government which has been eſtabliſhed by its Divine Founder. What that government is, having been already ſhewn, it need only be here obſerved, that for fifteen hundred years, the Chriſtian world knew no difference of opinion on this ſubject.

To get clear of the ſin of ſchiſm, then, we muſt deny the exiſtence of the church, conſidered as an eſtabliſhed ſociety under its regular and appropriate government; and in contradiction to the original and eſtabliſhed uſage of the term, apply it in a vague and indiſcriminate ſenſe to all aſſemblies of Chriſtians, of what denomination or perſuaſion ſoever.

This *latudinarian* mode of ſettling the point, by making the church of CHRIST comprehenſive of all the different ſects, into which the Chriſtian world has been divided, does certainly make it a matter of indifference, with what particular aſſembly of Chriſtians

a man is connected. For, upon this principle, he may attend the ſervice of the church in the morning, and that of the meeting-houſe in the afternoon, and ſtill preſerve a conſiſtency of character; becauſe, in in this caſe, he equally holds communion with the church in one place as in the other. But this idea being in direct contradiction to the letter of ſcripture, and ſubverſive of one great end which CHRIST had in view in the eſtabliſhment of his church, which was that the unity of the ſpirit and bond of peace might be preſerved among its members, it is not to be ſuppoſed that thoſe to whom I now addreſs myſelf are governed by it.

The conſideration of their being profeſſed members of that branch of the Chriſtian church eſtabliſhed in this country, added to that of their being ſerious and ſpiritually-minded perſons, obliges me to conclude, that they have ſome better reaſon to give for their connection with the church, than what is to be derived from the accidental circumſtance of their having been born in its communion. I therefore conclude, as in charity I ought, that it is either from an imperfect knowledge of, or want of due attention to, the nature and deſign of the Chriſtian church, as a regular and *viſible* ſociety, together with a partial view of

the end of its eſtabliſhment, that they are thus induced to act in contradiction to it.

It is a prevailing notion of modern times, that where the Goſpel of CHRIST is preached, there the church of CHRIST is aſſembled.

This notion, from its plauſibility, has with many gained a degree of credit, to which, upon examination, it will not be found entitled. In ſome ſenſe, indeed, every private Chriſtian family, aſſembled for the purpoſe of religious worſhip, may be conſidered as a church of CHRIST; but when we ſpeak of the church as *a public body*, under the direction of its appointed miniſters, this mode of expreſſion is certainly not to be admitted. As the church does not make the doctrine, ſo neither does the doctrine make the church. Theſe two ideas, though deſigned to be inſeparably connected, have nevertheleſs each a diſtinct and appropriate meaning. The *church* is the *candleſtick;* the *doctrine* the *light* ſet upon it, for the purpoſe of illuminating the place where it is fixed. The candleſtick without the light is an uſeleſs piece of furniture. On the other hand, the light without the candleſtick to hold it is in continual danger of being thrown down and extinguiſhed.

In the book called the Revelation of ST. JOHN, the explanation of the firſt viſion given by the angel was, that the *ſeven candleſticks* ſignified the *ſeven churches* of Aſia; and the ſeven ſtars, which he held in his right-hand, the ſeven angels (or biſhops) of thoſe ſeven churches. Our SAVIOUR, in alluſion to his Goſpel, is emblematically ſtiled "the *day-ſtar* from on high;" "the *light* which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." JOHN the Baptiſt is called "a burning and a *ſhining light;*" and his Apoſtles, "the *light of the world.*" In conformity with this idea of giving *light* to a world in darkneſs, the angel, in the viſion above-mentioned, calls the biſhops of the churches *ſtars*, in alluſion to their office, which was to ſpread the *light* of Goſpel truth through their reſpective dioceſes.

The threat, in the courſe of this viſion, pronounced againſt the church of Epheſus, was, that if ſhe did not repent, and do her firſt works, her *candleſtick* ſhould be removed, *i. e.* her miniſtry ſhould be taken away, and ſhe ſhould be no longer an Apoſtolic church. A threat which has been ſince carried into complete execution, in the caſe of all the churches above-mentioned.

From hence we ſee, that the church, as it was eſtabliſhed, that it might be (what the Apoſtle calls it) "the ground and pillar of the truth," ſo it is preſerved in the world for the ſake of the truth. When that truth is turned into a lie; in other words, when the doctrine of the church becomes ſo corrupt, as no longer to promote the end for which the church was originally eſtabliſhed; the *candleſtick*, we have to expect, will be removed; the eccleſiaſtical edifice, originally built upon the Apoſtles, will be taken down; and men left in that ſtate of darkneſs, in which the experience of the world tells us they muſt live, when the light which ſhineth from on high is withdrawn.

From the poſition here advanced then, upon the authority of the Apoſtle, that the church is preſerved in the world for the ſake of the truth contained in it; the inference is, that the truth, abſtractedly conſidered, does not conſtitute the church; for, upon that ſuppoſition, the eſtabliſhment of the church, as its guardian and preſervative, had been unneceſſary. The circumſtance of their having been joined together by GOD leads us to conclude, that the church and the truth cannot long exiſt in a perfect ſtate, independent of each other; and the experiment of ſeparating them has never been attempted by man,

without the evil conſequences attendant upon it having been manifeſted in a greater or leſs degree.*

But allowing that the Goſpel may be preached out of the church, and it is not ſaid that the removal of the light from the candleſtick is always immediately followed by its extinction, ſtill the members of the church ought not to go out of the church after it; for this appears to be doing evil that good may come of it, by making an obedience to GOD'S ordinance give way to a ſuppoſed ſpiritual advantage.

It will be urged, perhaps, that, in a matter of that eſſential concern as the ſalvation of a ſoul, all attention to the nature of the Chriſtian church will be ſwallowed up in the grand conſideration of

* "In all the annals of the church, whether under the Law or the Goſpel, there is not one inſtance of a ſchiſm againſt the prieſthood which GOD had appointed, but great errors in doctrine and worſhip did follow it. Thus the prieſthood which MICAH ſet up of his own head, and that which JEROBOAM ſet up in oppoſition to that of AARON, both ended in idolatry. Thus the Novatians and Donatiſts, who made ſchiſms againſt their biſhops, fell into grievous errors, though they did not renounce the faith.

"What hydra hereſies, and monſtrous ſects, fifty or ſixty at one time, flowed like a torrent into England, in the times of forty-one, after epiſcopacy was thrown down.

"So evident is that ſaying, that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, that we can hardly find any error which has come into the church, but upon an infraction made upon the epiſcopal authority." LESLEY.

following the ſound of the Goſpel, wherever it is to be heard.

Had man been left to judge abſolutely for himſelf in this buſineſs, it might have been difficult to have found an anſwer to the foregoing poſition; but GOD having judged for him, the moſt certain proviſion for man's ſalvation will doubtleſs be found in the uſe of the means appointed by GOD for that purpoſe; and theſe are to be had in the church.

It is not, therefore, a conſideration of ſo little importance as ſome men imagine, by whoſe miniſtry our prayers are offered up to GOD, or through whoſe hands Divine ordinances are received: for we are aſſured, the bleſſings and graces which Chriſtianity teaches us to expect from theſe ordinances, can *ordinarily* be derived from them, only when adminiſtered according to CHRIST's inſtitution, by perſons regularly called, as he has directed. Where ſuch may be had, and we may lawfully join with them, and uſe their miniſtry; to ſeparate from them, is to rebel againſt the authority of CHRIST, who appointed them.

But it is alleged by thoſe who occaſionally ſeparate from our church, that the clergy of it poſſeſs neither that zeal nor knowledge, which ought to characterize their profeſſion; that their preaching is

not that plain preaching of the croſs which it ought to be, but a ſpecies of human philoſophy, which can never make the hearer wiſe unto ſalvation.

I am not more ſurpriſed that ſuch a charge ſhould be brought, by thoſe who have ſuffered an acquaintance with the conduct of ſome miniſters of the church, and an attachment to certain preachers out of it, to create in their minds unfortunate prejudices, than I am perſuaded that the ground for ſuch a charge, as applicable to the great body of our clergy, does not in theſe days exiſt. The truth, I believe, is, that the defect of individuals among the clergy has been induſtriously magnified into a general plea for ſeparation from the church; which is, in fact, to pronounce that ſentence upon the cauſe, which ought to have been confined to the party, by whoſe unſkilfulneſs it has been injured.

The Goſpel, it ſhall be admitted, is not preached exactly in the ſame manner in the church, as it *ſometimes* is out of it; and GOD forbid it ſhould. From the general tenour of the writings of thoſe, to whom the miniſterial office was originally committed, who, from the circumſtance of their being under the immediate direction of the ſpirit, muſt be conſidered perfect models for imitation; the religion of CHRIST

appears to be a comprehenſive ſyſtem of faith and morality; the one conſidered as the foundation, the other the ſuperſtructure of the Chriſtian building. Now we know that where the foundation is not firmly laid, the ſuperſtructure raiſed upon it, however excellent the materials of which it is compoſed, muſt in a ſhort time fall to the ground. But we alſo know, that where the whole time is ſpent in laying the foundation, the work not being carried above ground, nothing will appear to which the term *building* can with propriety be applied. The object, therefore, which the Chriſtian divine ought to have in view, is ſo to join the two parts of the Chriſtian edifice, that they may together form one compleat building; in other words, ſo to connect faith and obedience, thoſe two parts of the Divine ſcheme of ſalvation, that they may conſtitute that perfect ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, whereby "man may become qualified for his heavenly inheritance."

Whoever ſees the ſubject in this light, and he who does not is unqualified for a teacher of Chriſtianity, will conſider it to be his duty to pay that attention to both parts of the Chriſtian ſyſtem, which, according to his beſt judgment, the circumſtances of thoſe committed to his charge may require. He will,

therefore, from time to time, be a preacher of *morality;* and he muſt be ſo, if he would fully diſcharge his office; not the *morality of the heathen*, which looks to the merit of the work as its title to reward, but *the morality of the Chriſtian*; a morality built upon the Goſpel foundation, and deriving all its value from the principle upon which it is performed; a morality dependent upon Divine grace, and looking only to Divine grace for acceptance, upon the terms of the Goſpel covenant.

The common objection, therefore, that is made to the *moral* preaching in our churches, is inapplicable to that ſpecies of morality of which we are now ſpeaking; and which, I truſt, is now generally inculcated. A morality of this nature, eſſential to the completion of the Chriſtian plan of ſalvation, muſt be preached; and where it is not, the whole truth, as it is in CHRIST JESUS, not being delivered, the Goſpel is, as it were, preached by halves; and the conſequence is, what it too generally has been, that the hearers of it are a ſort of *half Chriſtians*; ſtanding (if we may ſo ſay) in a tottering condition upon one leg; whilſt the deſign of the Chriſtian revelation was, that they ſhould ſtand firmly upon two.

Unfortunately, theſe pious members of our church, (for in that light I am moſt willing to conſider them) who are led to an occaſional ſeparation, from a zeal which they feel for the glory of the bleſſed Author of ſalvation, ſuffer themſelves to be frightened with the ſound of a word, to which they themſelves affix a wrong idea: hence it has happened, that the word has ofttimes been condemned, without the meaning annexed to it by the clergy, from whom they turn away, having been fairly examined; upon the ſame principle, that indiſcriminating Chriſtians are frightened with the words *croſs*, *altar*, *ſacrifice*, and *prieſt*, words peculiarly characteriſtic of the Chriſtian church, becauſe they have been ſeverally abuſed in the Romiſh communion.

Might I be permitted to ſpeak for the clergy, whom as a body I have always conſidered to be greatly miſrepreſented on this ſubject, (for in all general concluſions individual caſes muſt be put out of the queſtion;) I ſhould not think that I incurred a riſk of contradiction by ſaying, that the doctrine which they preach correſponded in the main with the revelation they have received. There was a time, indeed, when the doctrine of the croſs was kept too much out of ſight; and when the language of our pulpits, it

muſt be confeſſed, was calculated to teach men to place a vain dependence on *moral* performances. But it ſhould in juſtice be conſidered that this was an extreme, which grew out of a laudable deſire to counteract the fatal effects of that oppoſite and not leſs dangerous doctrine, by which the Chriſtianity of this country had long been diſgraced. But neither the writings nor diſcourſes of the preſent clergy, ſo far as my acquaintance with them has extended, juſtify, *generally ſpeaking*, the ſame charge being brought againſt them.

They preach, I truſt, CHRIST *crucified*, as the foundation of the Chriſtian building; and "other foundation can no man lay." They look, generally ſpeaking, to the Croſs as to fallen man's *only hope*, and *only title* to ſalvation. But it being the office of the Chriſtian miniſtry "rightly to divide the word of truth," the grand object they have before them is, *ſo* to preach the doctrine of the Croſs that no erroneous concluſion may be drawn from it.

Conſidering that CHRIST, by his death, has redeemed fallen man from the curſe of the law, and placed him, if the expreſſion may be allowed, in a *ſalvable* condition; they occaſionally feel themſelves called upon to enforce obedience to the moral law, as neceſſary to the accompliſhment of the Chriſtian

ſcheme; neceſſary to bring fallen man into a ſtate of acceptance with GOD, by qualifying him for the ſalvation which has been purchaſed.

Man's title to eternal life has been founded on an act of Divine grace and covenant from the beginning. For ADAM in his ſtate of innocence had no right to immortality, till GOD was pleaſed to make it over to him by covenant. Still it was a right ſuſpended on the performance of a condition. This right loſt by the fall, through the mercy of the ſecond covenant, has been re-eſtabliſhed in JESUS CHRIST. Man therefore, ſubſequent to the fall, with reſpect to a right to eternal life, ſtands on the ſame ground that ADAM did previous to that event. His right to eternal life being, what ADAM's originally was, a right founded on an act of Divine grace and covenant, but dependent on the performance of a condition.*

Hence it becomes neceſſary, that a proper diſtinction ſhould be made between the works of the law, conſidered as making any part of man's *title* to eternal ſalvation; and thoſe works which are required

* The reader will find this ſubject handled at large, and fully eſtabliſhed by authorities from the early writers of the church, in a "Diſcourſe on the firſt covenant and ſtate of man before the fall," by the learned Biſhop BULL. 8vo edit. vol. iii.

to be performed under the Goſpel, as the condition on which that title has been ſuſpended. Whoever ſees works in the former light, is what the judaizing Chriſtian was in ST. PAUL'S day, he is going about to "eſtabliſh his own righteouſneſs, not ſubmitting himſelf to the righteouſneſs of GOD." But if works are weighed in their proper ſcale, not as man's *title* to eternal ſalvation, but his *qualification* for it, upon the Goſpel axiom, that "without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the LORD," it appears to be of eſſential importance that they ſhould be preſſed upon Chriſtians at all times, as the *condition* upon which they are taught to look for the completion of the Divine covenant. "They ſhall walk with me in white," ſays CHRIST, "for they are worthy." Rev. iii. 4. *Worthy*, not abſolutely ſo in themſelves, but *relatively* ſo; worthy, in that ſenſe in which GOD, through CHRIST, graciouſly thinks fit to conſider them. In this ſenſe, "bleſſed are they that do his commandments, that they may have *right* to the tree of life, and may enter into the city of GOD." Rev. xxii. 14. A conditional right eſtabliſhed by *grace on the part of* GOD, not by *merit on the part of man;* for that, we truſt, is univerſally diſclaimed. GOD has graciouſly condeſcended to become, in a *certain ſenſe*,

man's debtor; in the language of ST. AUGUSTINE, "non aliquid debendo, ſed omnia promittendo, DEUS ſe facit debitorem." Upon this ground works become entitled to reward;* not becauſe they poſſeſs *in themſelves* a title to reward, but becauſe a gracious GOD is pleaſed, through CHRIST, to regard them as proper ſubjects for it. Such is the language of Scripture; ſuch the doctrine of the church of England.

But there is a manner of ſtating this ſubject, very common to thoſe who entertain a low opinion of our clergy; upon which it may be proper to remark.

The revelation of the Goſpel, ſo far as it reſpects the eſſential point of ſalvation, delivers a plain and intelligible language. It ſays to fallen man, believe rightly, and obey conſcientiouſly; and through the merits of a crucified SAVIOUR thou ſhalt enter into life. In the comprehenſive language of the Apoſtle,

* Extremum utrumque omni curâ vitandum: tum eorum qui opera noſtra per ſe vitæ eternæ meritoria ſtatuunt, (error iſte pontificiorum quorundum toto animo deteſtandus eſt) tum eorum etiam, qui eadem opera ullam aliam cum cœleſti præmio connexionem habere præter hunc, quòd ſint fidei ejus, cui ſalus promittitur, ſignia, omniò negant. Hæc enim ſententia non paucis, uſque clariſſimis ſcripturæ teſtimoniis (ut vidimus) apertum bellum indicit. Media itaque via hic tenenda eſt, ut dicamus, relationis iſtius, quam ad vitam æternam habent opera noſtra, unicum illud eſſe fundamentum, *quod ſint conditio in fædore Evangelico requiſita*, cui præſtitæ ex eodem gratioſo fædore præmium cæleſte indulgeatur. BULL. Harm. Apoſt. cap. v. ſect. 5.

it teaches him to "deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great GOD and our Saviour JESUS CHRIST; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus ii. 12. The doctrine of ſalvation, then, is not a ſcheme of natural philoſophy; it is not a ſyſtem of civil policy; nor is it the art of fine ſpeaking and rhetorical diſcourſe. But it teaches men of every rank the duties of their reſpective ſtations; what they are to believe, and what to do, in order to their being ſaved. At the ſame time it furniſhes directions and aſſiſtances for the reſiſting and overcoming the temptations with which they are aſſailed, together with the beſt and moſt powerful arguments for the promotion of that holineſs, which conſtitutes the indiſpenſable preparative to eternal happineſs.

If we will receive this doctrine as it has been revealed, we certainly ſhall be ſaved by it. But if we will make a doctrine for ourſelves, different from that which CHRIST has taught, it matters not on which ſide the error lies, whether by repoſing a falſe confidence on the one hand, or poſſeſſing an evil heart of

unbelief on the other; in either caſe we make void the ſcheme of ſalvation that has been projected, and our miſcarriage muſt be inevitable.

Now the perſons to whom I immediately allude, have always appeared to me to *confound*, rather than to *explain*, the Chriſtian doctrine; by repreſenting faith as comprehenſive of all Chriſtian duties. Where true faith is, there, they tell you, will be repentance, obedience, and holineſs of life; in ſhort every thing that tends to the completion of the Chriſtian character. Certainly where *true faith* is, (underſtanding thereby true *lively* faith) ſo long as it continues in that ſtate, it muſt be poſſeſſed of all the properties belonging to it. But this is a deſcription of what Chriſtian faith ought to be, when in its perfect ſtate, accompanied with its correſpondent effects; not what faith, *abſtractedly conſidered*, really is. As ſuch, though it poſſibly may do no harm, whilſt confined to the minds of thoſe perſons, who through Divine grace feel themſelves diſpoſed to that life of holineſs, to which Chriſtian faith was deſigned to lead; yet it will do, and has done much injury to the Chriſtian cauſe, when conſidered in connection with that erroneous and dangerous concluſion, which ignorant and unſanctified men have at all times been ready to draw from it.

To ſay that faith, by which we underſtand a *firm belief in* CHRIST, as the whole and ſole cauſe of ſalvation, will ſecure to man the poſſeſſion of all thoſe graces and virtues neceſſary to adorn his Chriſtian profeſſion, is, in other words, to ſay, that when the foundation is well laid, it will of itſelf raiſe the ſuperſtructure; or, to make uſe of another ſcripture alluſion, where the root of the tree is planted in CHRIST, Chriſtian fruit will be the conſequent produce of the branches. But in this caſe facts are, alas! often againſt us.

"No corrupt tree bringeth forth good fruit." Man, in his preſent ſtate, is that corrupt tree of nature, from which no ſpiritual fruit is to be expected. But it does not from hence follow, that when this corrupt tree is moved into GOD'S nurſery, if we may be allowed the expreſſion, and has its root planted in Chriſtian ſoil, that it will of courſe bring forth good fruit; for this muſt depend upon circumſtances, neceſſary to be taken into the account. The ſituation of a tree may be improved, without any material change being produced in its actual condition. It is not ſufficient, therefore, that this tree of nature (to carry on our alluſion) be moved out of a barren and unfruitful ſoil; it muſt moreover be regularly pruned

and trained, and the wild and luxuriant branches mu
be carefully and conſtantly cut back, that prop
nouriſhment may be carried to the bearing wood
ſhould not this proceſs be regularly purſued, in ſpi
of the ſoil in which the root ſtands, no fruit will b
brought to perfection.

Similar to this is the concluſion which our SAVIOU
has led us to draw upon this ſubject, where he re
preſents himſelf under the emblem of the vine, an
his Father under that of the huſbandman. "Ever
branch in me," ſays CHRIST, "that beareth no
fruit, the huſbandman taketh away." By which we
underſtand, that *being in CHRIST*, i. e. having faith in
CHRIST as a SAVIOUR, and *bearing Chriſtian fruit*,
do not always mean the ſame thing. Care, conſe-
quently, ſhould be taken, that theſe two different
meanings be not confounded. *Faith in CHRIST* is
allowed to be, if we may ſo ſay, the grand germina-
ting principle of the whole ſpiritual creation. "The
branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in
the vine." But though the branch does abide in
the vine, ſhould no ſap from the root be conveyed
into it, it will ſtill be unfruitful.

In this particular addreſs, therefore, to his Apoſtles,
our SAVIOUR may be underſtood as telling his diſ-

ciples at large, that they muſt not only abide in him, but that *his ſpirit muſt alſo abide in them*, if they would become what Chriſtianity was deſigned to make them, "purified perſons, zealous of good works." Without the ſpirit of CHRIST, it is certain, we are none of his. The ſhadow, in this caſe, will not be taken for the ſubſtance. As members of his church, we may, in ſome ſenſe, be ſaid *to be in CHRIST;* but being *dead*, not *living* members of it, we are thoſe unfruitful branches of the vine, which the huſbandman taketh away.

It is readily allowed, that many of thoſe ſpiritual perſons, who occaſionally ſeparate from the church, ſee the ſubject in the light in which it is here placed; although the gratitude which they feel towards that SAVIOUR, who has wrought the great work of ſalvation, accompanied with a deſire to guard againſt any ſelf-ſufficient claims on the part of man, upon the ground of his own performances, induces them at times to give that partial account of the Goſpel plan of ſalvation, which experience has proved to be unfavourable to the promotion of its general purpoſe. I ſay, *partial* account of the Goſpel plan of ſavation; becauſe the whole truth, as it is in JESUS CHRIST, is not fairly brought forward.

When ſpeaking, for inſtance, of the fundamentals of Chriſtianity, they often neglect to pay due regard to thoſe other parts which are neceſſary to the perfection of the Chriſtian ſcheme. They deſcribe Chriſtianity, as "a ſcheme for juſtifying the ungodly;" "for reconciling us to GOD when enemies;" "and the fruits of holineſs* as the effects, not the cauſe of our juſtification;" as "a ſcheme which opens the door of mercy to the greateſt and vileſt of penitent ſinners."† In *one ſenſe*, all this is certainly true; and GOD forbid that the clergy of the church ſhould preach other doctrine; that they ſhould not bear their moſt decided teſtimony againſt all pretenſions to ſalvation, upon the ground of *human* merit;

* Provided Chriſtians are diſpoſed to underſtand one another; this ſubject, it is preſumed, need not to furniſh occaſion for diſpute: becauſe it will probably be found, that the ſame thing is meant, although the mode of expreſſion may be different. The "fruits of holineſs" are both the effects and the cauſe of juſtification, though in different ſenſes. They are the effects of our juſtification in baptiſm; by which ſacrament the grace of the Holy Spirit, "from whom all holy deſires, all good counſels, and all juſt works, do proceed," was originally conferred on the party; whilſt, in another ſenſe, the fruits of holineſs are, not in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, *the cauſe*, but the condition, or as Biſhop BULL's term is, the "*cauſa ſine qua non*," *that without which* our final juſtification at the day of judgment will not take place: for "without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the LORD."

† WILBERFORCE's Practical View, p. 121, 122.

for fallen man can have no claim upon his Creator but by virtue of an act of grace that has been paſſed in his favour. But this act, it is to be obſerved, contains in it certain conditions; the performance of which, though not to be conſidered as *man's title* to the benefits of the act in queſtion, is nevertheleſs neceſſary, according to the revelation of the Divine will, to ſecure to him their poſſeſſion.*

When, therefore, the Goſpel covenant, of which this act of free grace on the part of CHRIST conſtitutes the baſis, is kept out of ſight; when performances and conditions on man's part are decried, upon the laudable, though miſtaken, idea of preventing all encroachment upon the benefits of CHRIST's ſatisfaction, as extended to us freely "without money and without price;" when the obſervance of the moral precepts of the Goſpel, enforced by the awful conſideration, that GOD "will judge every man according to his works," is deſcribed as "*vain wiſdom, and falſe philoſophy*;"† and when the work and commandment brought forward to the attention of the Chriſtian diſciple, as it were in oppoſition to this

* The reader will find this ſubject handled at large in "Vindiciæ Eccleſiæ Anglicanæ," cap. vi.

† WILBERFORCE's Practical View, p. 131,

revealed account of a future judgment, are comprehended in this one act of faith, that he "ſhould believe in the name of JESUS CHRIST;" we cannot be ſurpriſed, that perſons who have formed no adequate conception of the Chriſtian ſcheme of ſalvation, conſidered not only as providing a redemption from the immediate conſequences of the fall, but alſo means for the reſtoration of the fallen creature, to that ſpiritual ſtate which can alone qualify him for a ſpiritual inheritance; ſhould, by taking *part* of the Goſpel for the *whole* of it, fall ſhort of the perfection to which it was deſigned to lead.*

* The following is a ſpecimen of the doctrine propagated by one of thoſe ſelf-conſtituted itinerant teachers, who, to the misfortune of this country, the abuſe of toleration, "that glory and diſgrace of Proteſtantiſm," as it was called by a late learned Biſhop,† is now pouring forth upon us; the channel from whence I received it leaving me no room to doubt of its authenticity. "The regular Clergy know nothing of Chriſtianity; their whole preaching is, *work*, *work*. They do not know, you cannot work. You muſt wait your call—and for your comfort I tell you, it is never too late. If on your ſick-bed you can call out on the name of JESUS, or groan JESUS, or even whiſper JESUS with your laſt breath, you are ſafe." How far ſuch a mode of preaching (and I have reaſon to think it to be by no means an uncommon one) is calculated to promote the two great ends of religion,—the honour of GOD, and the welfare of mankind,—the reader will judge. Grieved am I to think, that the lower order of people in this country, who, generally ſpeaking, are well diſpoſed to religion, ſhould be liable to be thus deluded.

† Biſhop LOWTH's Sermon before the Society for promoting the Goſpel. 1771.

Faith in the all-ſufficient merits of a crucified Redeemer, muſt, by all who receive the Goſpel, be admitted as the Chriſtian's only hope; it being his *only title* to ſalvation. Through the door of faith, the Chriſtian diſciple is admitted into the church; as a member of the church, he is entitled to all the benefits of the Chriſtian diſpenſation. Theſe benefits are, redemption from a ſtate of certain condemnation, and a reſtoration to a ſtate of poſſible or conditional ſalvation; together with a gracious proviſion of aſſiſtance to make that ſalvation ſure. But whether this ſtate of *poſſible* or conditional ſalvation through CHRIST may become a ſtate of *actual* ſalvation to the believing party, muſt depend upon the uſe made of the means vouchſafed for that purpoſe. For although faith is the leading condition of ſalvation, and the foundation of all Chriſtian graces and virtues, upon the Goſpel axiom, "that without CHRIST we *can do nothing*," yet to repreſent faith as conſtituting the completion of the Chriſtian character, upon the idea that it *neceſſarily* comprehends under it the performance of all Chriſtian duties, is what the ſcripture, I conceive, no where warrants, and what experience continually contradicts. A writer, who has lately favoured the world with his thoughts on this ſubject, and with

whom every Chriſtian muſt wiſh to join in opinion, has told us, "that true faith is in ſcripture regarded as the radical principle of holineſs." Thus far every one who underſtands the Goſpel muſt agree with him. But when we are told by this ſame writer,* that where the root exiſts, the proper fruit will be brought forth, we feel ourſelves called upon to deny the concluſion; becauſe it may lead to conſequences fatal to the cauſe it is deſigned to ſerve. Nor does the proof brought from ST. JAMES, in ſupport of it, ſtrike me in the light in which it is placed on this occaſion. ST. JAMES has always appeared to me to ſpeak, not of a man who merely ſays that he has faith, and has it not; but of one who actually poſſeſſes faith, but a faith unavailable to ſalvation, in conſequence of its being unaccompanied by its correſpondent effects. The reader, by turning to the chapter referred to, (JAMES ii.) and reading from the 14th verſe to the end of it, will be qualified to judge for himſelf.

Chriſtian fruit, it is allowed, can grow only on the Chriſtian tree. But it does not follow, (as it has been above obſerved) that where the root of this tree exiſts, there the fruits of it will *neceſſarily* be brought forth. Theſe are by no means conver-

* WILBERFORCE's Practical View, p. 122.

tible propoſitions. To repreſent them as ſuch, is to ſay in other words, that principles and practice always go together; whereas the fact is, through the deceitfulneſs of the human heart, they are too often at variance with each other. And the general language of ſcripture agrees with this poſition; in which faith and works, the tree and its fruits, are ſo clearly diſtinguiſhed from each other, that no man who conſiders that the Bible, as containing a Divine revelation, muſt be uniform and conſiſtent in all its parts, can, it ſhould be ſuppoſed, be at a loſs for his concluſion.

It is true, faith is often repreſented in ſcripture as the *completion* of the Chriſtian plan of ſalvation. And ſo, when taken in its full and finiſhed ſtate, as made *perfect by works*, according to ST. JAMES's deſcription, it certainly is. But we are now guarding againſt a miſtake, to which an *unqualified* uſe of this term often leads.

When our SAVIOUR laid the foundation of his religion, he annexed ſalvation to *faith*; becauſe *faith in him* was the *baſis* of that plan of ſalvation which he came to publiſh to the world. When ST. PAUL told the Jews that they muſt be ſaved by *faith*, and not by the *works of the law*; and that the Goſpel alone contained the power of GOD unto ſalvation

unto every one that believeth; his object was to oppoſe the new diſpenſation, whoſe baſis was *faith in CHRIST crucified*, to that old one which CHRIST came to take away; becauſe, in conſequence of the fall, man was no longer in a condition to be ſaved by it. Upon the Jew renouncing all dependence upon his own righteouſneſs, and profeſſing his faith in CHRIST crucified, as the author and finiſher of his ſalvation, he was admitted into the privileges of the Goſpel covenant. But in this caſe *his faith* was, as ST. IGNATIUS calls it, "the *beginning* or the *principle* of his Chriſtian life." It gave him admiſſion into the Chriſtian church. Now had ST. PAUL thought, that where this principle was once eſtabliſhed, it would of courſe draw after it all thoſe graces and virtues neceſſary to render it effectual to ſalvation; in other words, had he thought that the faith, which gave admiſſion into the church, would of courſe make the party a *perfect* member of it, he would not have furniſhed his diſciples with that complete ſyſtem of moral duties which is to be found in his writings. If he had thought that faith included under it Chriſtian practice, his direction to TITUS, that the conſtant ſubject of his preaching ſhould be, "that thoſe who *believed in GOD* (thoſe

who profeſſed the faith) ſhould be careful to maintain good works," had been ſuperfluous.

If ST. PETER had thought that Chriſtian faith was neceſſarily of that prolific nature, that it could no where exiſt without producing its proper fruits, he would not, after having mentioned the precious faith obtained through the righteouſneſs of GOD, have directed his diſciples "to give all diligence to *add to their faith*, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godlineſs; to godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kindneſs, charity." The important reaſon for this direction he immediately ſubjoins: "For" (continues the Apoſtle) "if theſe be in you, and abound, they make you that ye ſhall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. But he that lacketh theſe things is blind." He may have a knowledge of our Lord JESUS CHRIST as the Saviour of mankind, and profeſs his faith in him as ſuch; but his faith being *barren* and *unfruitful* will profit him nothing. "Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to *make your calling and election ſure*: for if you do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall. For *ſo* (or upon this condition) an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto you abundantly

into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST."*

This plain paſſage from ST. PETER places the whole plan of ſalvation through CHRIST fairly before us. It repreſents the exceeding great and precious promiſes which have been obtained for man, through the righteouſneſs of CHRIST, as the baſis of his ſalvation; but the bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, as the condition upon which that ſalvation will be ultimately realized. In this ſenſe, the writings of ST. PAUL and ST. JAMES, and all other parts of ſcripture, will be found to harmonize; and we need no longer be afraid to talk of works, if we repreſent them, as the learned Biſhop BULL,† in vindication of

* 2 PETER i. 5, 6, &c.

† "Accedamus jam ad alterum iſtud, quod breviter notandum duximus; nempe, phraſi illâ, ἐξ ἔργων, non id voluiſſe JACOBUM opera noſtra eſſe juſtificationis noſtræ cauſam *principalem* aut *meritoriam; illa* quippe in merâ et gratuita DEI Patris miſericordiâ, *hæc* in CHRISTI ſolius morte ac meritis unicè ſtatuenda eſt, et ab Apoſtolo revera ſtatuitur. Etenim quamvis particula ἐξ eam nonunquam vim obtineat, ſæpe tamen adhibere ſolet ſenſu quodam mitiori, ut notet *medium quodcunque rei obtinendæ, ſive conditionem* præcedaneam, quæ vulgo cauſa *ſine qua non* dicitur, licet revera vix cauſæ nomen mereatur. Atque is loquendi modus neque a communi ſenſu abhorret, neque a ſtylo ſcripturæ alienus eſt. Ut enim alia taceam, cum dicitur homo ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῦσθαι, particula ἐκ manifeſtè hoc ſenſu ſumitur. Quippe ne ipſâ quidem fide tanquam

St. JAMES, has repreſented them; not as "either the *principal* or the *meritorious* cauſe of man's ſalvation, but as only the *condition*, upon which, according to the terms of the Goſpel covenant, man is to become partaker of it."

There is another part of this reſpectable writer's publication, which, as it ſtrikes me, ought to be read with ſome comment; becauſe, as it ſtands, it ſeems calculated to lead the indiſcriminating reader to a concluſion different, I ſhould ſuppoſe, from that meant to be conveyed by it. The part alluded to is to be found in p. 327 and 328, and runs thus: "But the nature of the holineſs, to which the deſires of the true Chriſtian are directed, is no other than the reſtoration of the image of GOD; and as to the manner of acquiring it, diſclaiming with indignation every idea of attaining it by his own ſtrength, all his hopes of poſſeſſing it reſt altogether on the Divine aſſurances of the operation of the Holy Spirit, in thoſe

causâ principali, imo non ut causâ omnino, niſi improprie dictâ, juſtificari aliquis dici poteſt. Dicitur igitur homo, ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦσθαι, quia *bona opera conditio ſunt, juxta ordinationem divinam in Evangelico fœdere ſtabilitam neceſſario in hoc requiſita*, ut quis juſtificetur, *i. e.* remiſſionem peccatorum per CHRISTUM partam obtineat, DEOque ad ſalutem gratus et acceptus fiat."

BULL. Harmon. Apoſtol. cap. i. § 8.

who cordially embrace the Goſpel of CHRIST."— Thus far we are perfectly agreed.

To proceed with our author:

"He knows, therefore, that this holineſs is not to precede his reconciliation to GOD, and be its cauſe; but to follow it, and be its effect. That in ſhort it is by faith in CHRIST only, that he is to be juſtified in the ſight of GOD; to be delivered from the condition of a child of wrath, and a ſlave of SATAN; to be adopted into the family of GOD; to become an heir of GOD, and a joint heir with CHRIST; entitled to all the privileges which belong to this high relation, here to the ſpirit of grace, and a partial renewal after the image of his Creator; hereafter, to the more perfect poſſeſſion of the Divine likeneſs, and an inheritance of eternal glory."

That *general reconciliation* of GOD to *man* in his fallen condition, through the ſacrifice of CHRIST, by virtue of which he is placed in a ſtate of conditional ſalvation under the new covenant, ſeems here not ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed from that *particular reconciliation* of GOD to the *individual* in his redeemed condition, when reſtored to that degree of likeneſs to his Creator neceſſary to qualify him for admiſſion into his preſence.

There can be no ſuch thing as holineſs in man, independent of the operation of the Holy Spirit; and the work of the Holy Spirit being the part of the Goſpel ſcheme of ſalvation conſequent upon that all-ſufficient ſacrifice by which alone GOD became reconciled to his fallen creatures, it certainly follows, that this work cannot precede the cauſe which gave it birth.

But every one admitted into the church is, in ſome ſenſe, in a ſtate of reconciliation with GOD; that is, he is taken out of a condemned condition, in which there can be no holineſs, and placed in a condition of grace and relative holineſs; in conſequence of his dedication to the ſervice of GOD in baptiſm. But whether this relative holineſs may become perfect holineſs, effectual to the ſalvation of the party, muſt depend upon ſubſequent conſiderations. The Apoſtle therefore, after having firſt mentioned GOD's reconciliation to man in CHRIST, as the foundation of all our hope, proceeds to remind us of man's reconciliation to GOD, as neceſſary to give effect to the former. "We pray you in CHRIST's ſtead, be ye reconciled to GOD:" and how this is to be effected, the Apoſtle proceeds to inform us; "We pray you receive not the grace of GOD in vain;" but having in conſequence of GOD's reconciliation to man, the

promiſes of an eternal inheritance through CHRIST, and of Divine aſſiſtance to qualify us for it, "let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, *perfecting holineſs* in the fear of GOD:" in other words let the work of the Holy Ghoſt, to whoſe aſſiſtance the diſpenſation of grace has given us a title, be carried on to perfection in our hearts; and *ſo* ſhall the work of reconciliation between GOD and man be rendered complete.*

The line of diſtinction between *profeſſing* faith and *practiſing* faith ſhould at all times be ſo marked, as to leave a diſtinct idea upon the mind reſpecting a ſubject which has been ſo open to miſconception. *Profeſſing faith*, it is to be obſerved, gives admiſſion only into the church of CHRIST, and a title to the privileges of the baptiſmal covenant. *Practiſing faith*, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, is what renders that admiſſion a title of *real* value; by producing that renewal of our fallen nature, which ſecures our inheritance of eternal glory.

Words need not be multiplied to convince the reader, that theſe are two very different things, and that the one does not *neceſſarily* comprehend the

* 2 Cor. v. 20; vii. 1.

other. The remark, therefore, ſubjoined by our author to the above paſſage, "that faith, where genuine, always ſuppoſes repentance, abhorrence of ſin, &c." p. 328, is calculated to lead into error, becauſe it teaches the reader to take for granted, what muſt always remain to be proved.

For, allowing that the practical precepts of Chriſtianity do grow out of her peculiar doctrines, which is certainly true; yet that they are "*inſeparably connected with them*,"* is a poſition not to be admitted: for in ſuch caſe faith and practice may be conſidered but as two words for the ſame thing; and it becomes impoſſible for profeſſors "to hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs;" which ST. PAUL tells us ſome did in his days, and which, in conſequence of the corrupt nature of man, ſome will do in a greater or leſs degree in every ſtage of the Chriſtian church. The learned Biſhop BULL has ſo clearly ſtated this ſubject, as to render further enlargement upon it unneceſſary.*

* WILBERFORCE, p. 382.

* "Quod jactant de inſtrumentalitate fidei in juſtificationis negotio, nihil etiam quam *meram et inanem ſubtilitatem redolet*. Præterquam enim quod extra ſcripturas hîc loquuntur, ſi inſtrumentum ſtrictè et propriè ſumatur pro causâ efficiente minus principali, clarum eſt, *fidem juſtificationis inſtrumentum nullo modo dici poſſe*. Nam primò, *cum juſtificatio ſit actio* DEI *ſolius, eaque tota extra nos*,

The Goſpel ſcheme of ſalvation can then only be complete, when the whole of it is taken together; when each part of the Chriſtian obligation, comprehended under the general terms of faith, repentance, and obedience, is ſuffered to have its due weight in the ſcale of human eſtimation.

In a word, that man is not to be ſaved by any works of righteouſneſs of his own, becauſe, in conſe-

producta, quomodo vel fides noſtra, vel quævis noſtra actio ad juſtificationis effectum producendum phyſicam ullam efficientiam habeat, prorſus ακαταληπτον *eſt.* Deinde omnis cauſa inſtrumentalis, (ut jam innuimus) ſuo modo in effectum influit, eique effecti productio proprié attribui poteſt. Jam veró, cum juſtificatio nihil aliud ſit quàm gratioſus DEI actus, quo precata noſtra nobis condonet, ac nos ad ſalutem acceptet, valdè abſurdum eſſet dicere, vel fidem, vel opera noſtra, vel quidvis aliud noſtri, aut remittere peccata noſtra, aut perſonas noſtras acceptare; quod tamen, ſi inſtrumentalis cauſa juſtificationis fides ſit, planè diſcendum eſſet. Etiam ſi igitur concederemus, habitum fidei eſſe inſtrumentum iſtius actûs quo CHRISTUM amplectimur; qui tamen inde intulerit, fidem eſſe juſtificationis inſtrumentum, manifeſtiſſimæ certè inconſequentiæ reus tenebitur. Ut ergo quod res eſt dicam, ſi fidem inſtrumentum eſſe velimus, fieri non poteſt, ut concipiatur alio modo inſtrumentum eſſe, quàm quatenus opus eſt ex preſcripto, et per gratiam DEI a nobis præſtitum. Conditio enim, quatenus præſtita eſt, aliquo modo medium, ſive inſtrumentum dici poteſt, quo conſequimur rem, *quæ ſub conditione promittitur.* Et vocatur hoc a nonnullis inſtrumentum morale. Et ſi hoc ſenſu inſtrumentum ſumatur (nempe pro conditione ſive inſtrumento morali) fidem eſſe unicum juſtificationis inſtrumentum omnino negamus; cum, ut ſatis evincimus, etiam pœnitentiæ opera non minus neceſſaria ad juſtificationem obtinendam a Spiritu Sancto diſerté ſtatuantur."—BULL. Harmon. Apoſt. cap. ii. § 9.

quence of their imperfection, they can have no merit in the eyes of GOD, but by what JESUS CHRIST has done and ſuffered for him, is a doctrine which cannot be too unequivocally expreſſed; at the ſame time it is to be remembered, that the qualification of the party, through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, is the indiſpenſable condition upon which ſalvation through CHRIST is ſuſpended.

Satisfied in my mind, that there can be no real difference of opinion between this reſpectable author and myſelf upon this matter, he will not, I flatter myſelf, feel offended at my endeavour to counteract a concluſion, to which certain unqualified paſſages, againſt which the beſt of writers are not always upon their guard, may poſſibly lead. The apparent diſagreement between us, (if I have been correct in my remarks) ariſes from the different idea annexed to *faith*, conſidered either as a comprehenſive term, including under it all the conditions of the Goſpel covenant on man's part, or the *ſimple act of believing* the Chriſtian doctrine, unaccompanied with that ſpiritual transformation of the ſinner, neceſſary to render the death of CHRIST effectual to his ſalvation. Theſe two ideas, applicable to faith in *its different ſtages*, ought at all times to be clearly diſtinguiſhed,

to qualify the Chriſtian to form a correct judgment upon this important ſubject.

The account given by this author of the actual ſtate of Chriſtianity in this country is, it is to be feared, but too true. Vital Chriſtianity we can ſcarce expect to find at a time, when the meaning annexed to that term is, to the bulk of profeſſing Chriſtians, become unintelligible. In this degenerate ſtate of things, every man who feels for the honour of GOD, and the welfare of the community, muſt regard with gratitude and reſpect an author, whoſe profeſſed object it is to reſtore this dead thing, *modern Chriſtianity*, to life and vigour; and, in the ſcripture ſenſe, will bid him "GOD ſpeed." But whilſt I agree with this author in his account of the declining ſtate of genuine Chriſtianity, I cannot ſo perfectly agree with him with reſpect to one cauſe, to which the further continuance of that decline is to be attributed.

The clergy of the church, as we have already obſerved, ſoon after the Reſtoration, with a view to counteract the abuſe that had been made of the doctrine of grace, gave into the oppoſite extreme. Finding the ſtick bent too much one way, they injudiciouſly adopted the natural proceſs of bending it the other, with the view of bringing it ſtraight. But

the clergy of the preſent day do not, I conceive, ſtand in the ſame predicament.

Doctrinal points, it ſhall be admitted, are not ſo often, nor ſo powerfully, enforced in our pulpits as they once were, or as they ought to be; but I do not recollect having ever heard a ſermon which, in fair conſtruction, placed man's hopes of happineſs upon the unſound ground of his own moral performances. Indeed I am inclined to hope that the generality of hearers, in the preſent day, poſſeſs no reliſh for ſuch heatheniſh doctrine. There is a wide difference, it will be allowed, between powerfully enforcing a fundamental article of the Chriſtian faith, and preaching a doctrine incompatible with it. However deficient ſome of our clergy may have been in the former caſe, inſtances, I truſt, are very rare of their being found guilty in the latter; thereby proving themſelves declared traitors to the cauſe they have in charge to maintain.

It is not conſiſtent with candour, from incautious language occaſionally made uſe of, (and what man is always ſo guarded in his expreſſions, as to bid defiance to miſconſtruction?) to draw thoſe concluſions either for an author or a ſpeaker, which they themſelves do not acknowledge. If, therefore, the ſubject

of CHRIST crucified be not always taken up in our pulpits, yet when it is conſidered that the ſermon is accompanied with a liturgy, which preaches that ſaving doctrine throughout; charity forbids me to conclude, unleſs upon very evident ground, that it is the deſign of the preacher to place the Chriſtian's hope upon any other foundation.

May it not happen, then, that judgment in this caſe has ſometimes been too haſtily formed? A perſon, for inſtance, who entertains the unfavourable idea here alluded to, reſpecting our clergy, enters a church with a certain prejudice in his mind: and ſhould it ſo happen, that the object of the preacher's diſcourſe is the enforcement of ſome practical duty of Chriſtianity, he leaves the church in diſguſt, with the concluſion that nothing but *moral* preaching is to be heard in it. He attends, it may be, ſome irregular place of worſhip in the evening, where the fundamental doctrine of the croſs happens to be the ſubject of the preacher's diſcourſe; he goes away confirmed in the concluſion drawn in the morning; and the clergy of the church are, in conſequence, unequivocally condemned. Whereas, had this ſame perſon attended the ſame church the following Sunday, he might have heard the ſame miniſter, perhaps, who on

the preceding Sunday had taken up a practical duty of Chriſtianity into the pulpit, now enforcing that ſame doctrine of the croſs, which had given the preaching of the conventicle the decided preference in his mind.

Now would this perſon, before he pronounces ſentence in this caſe, but conſider, that it is the duty of a Chriſtian miniſter, not to dwell altogether on the fundamental truths of religion; but alſo (to make uſe of our author's words) "to trace and lay open all the ſecret motions of inward corruption, and to inſtruct his hearers, how beſt to conduct themſelves in every diſtinct part of the Chriſtian warfare; how beſt to ſtrive againſt each particular vice, and to cultivate each grace of the Chriſtian character;" he would conclude, that this could not otherwiſe be done, than by dedicating a conſiderable portion of his public inſtructions to the due enforcement of the *practical duties of Chriſtianity*; that the man of GOD may "become perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto every good word and work." In doing this, if the clergy are not to have credit given them for preaching morality upon a *Chriſtian plan*, they are placed in that unfortunate ſituation, as not to have it in their power to diſcharge their office to the ſatisfaction either of themſelves or their hearers.

decline of a cauſe, without the powerful aſſiſtance of which, man, though living in civilized ſociety, can ſcarcely be conſidered as far removed from his wild ſtate of nature.

Whilſt, then, I would cordially join in bearing the moſt public teſtimony againſt that lukewarmneſs in the cauſe of CHRIST, that indifference, and even daring contempt for religion, which characteriſe the preſent age; and whilſt I admit, as in truth I muſt, that ſome of our clergy do not feel that intereſt for the Chriſtian cauſe, which they ought to feel; and by their injudicious conformity to the manners of a diſſipated age, leſſen that influence which their ſacred profeſſion ought to have in the world; I ſtill am inclined to think, that, taken as a body, they are more wanting in *zeal* than in *knowledge*. But upon this ſubject, did I feel diſpoſed, it would not well become me, ſenſible as I am of my own manifold defects, to enlarge.

Diſallowing, however, the charge againſt the clergy in the extent in which it is brought, I ſtill feel ſo ſtrongly what the cauſe of genuine Chriſtianity owes to the character and abilities of this author, as to give him full credit for the ſincerity of his intention. At the ſame time it may be ſuggeſted to his

conſideration, whether a deſcription of the actual ſtate of our church, as deſtitute of the vital ſpirit of Chriſtianity, in conſequence of the genuine principles of it not being inculcated by its paſtors, who, in their collective character, are repreſented as "having forſaken the fountain of living water, and hewed them out ciſterns, which can hold no water;" be not a deſcription, in the preſent day, when eſtabliſhments poſſeſs ſuch little hold upon the human mind, which may do harm, by putting an idea into the minds of inconſiderate people, not eaſy to be eradicated; and thereby preventing the clergy from doing that good, which the majority of them, I truſt, are ſtill diſpoſed to do.

For it may be aſked, to what ſuch a deſcription of the inſufficiency of our clergy (derived more from the indecent revilings of irregular preachers, than from fact;) muſt lead, when accompanied with that notorious ignorance of the nature of the Chriſtian church, which now univerſally prevails; but to a more general ſeparation from its communion, than we now deplore? And in proportion as this event takes place, we know, from paſt experience, how to calculate the conſequence. In proportion as the body of the community ſeparate from the eſtabliſhed church,

the eſtabliſhment itſelf is weakened; becauſe every ſeparatiſt becomes, upon principle, an enemy to it. And ſhould this enmity, by a continued addition to its cauſe, proceed ſo far as to effect its ſubverſion, we need no prophet to inform us, that our ineſtimable liturgy, to which, as to the moſt ſpiritual production of the human mind, we now look up with reverence, will not be ſuffered to ſurvive the ruin.

"By all who are ſtudious of their country's welfare, more particularly by all who deſire to ſupport our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, every effort ſhould be uſed to revive the Chriſtianity of our better days."* Upon the revival of primitive Chriſtianity, there can be no diſſenting opinion among thoſe who have duly conſidered the influence which religion has upon ſociety; which may be regarded as the key-ſtone of the arch which bears up the weight of all human government. But though the ſupport of an eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, as our author has obſerved, depends in a great meaſure upon its poſſeſſion of public opinion, it muſt, nevertheleſs, be remarked, that the truth and excellence of Chriſtianity become no certain ſecurity for the poſſeſſion of that opinion. We know that the church was in its pureſt condition,

* WILBERFORCE's Practical View, p. 419.

when public opinion, or the judgment of the ſtate, was decidedly againſt it. We alſo know, that when the eſtabliſhment of the church was loſt in this country, that loſs was not to be attributed to a decay of Chriſtianity in it, ſo much as to ſome other notorious cauſes. From whence we are authoriſed to conclude, that the exiſtence of vital Chriſtianity in the church, furniſhing no ſecurity for the poſſeſſion of public opinion; the loſs of that opinion can become no ſure criterion, by which to form a judgment of its actual corruption. Although, therefore, the loſs of that eſtabliſhment which the church now enjoys in this country, may, in the judgment of GOD, be the conſequence of the degeneracy of its clergy; and in this light their character muſt become a ſubject of intereſting concern with every well-wiſher to the conſtitution; yet as this event has been, and conſequently may be, brought about by *other* cauſes, it were to be wiſhed that the popular publication alluded to had provided ſome antidote againſt *their prevalent effect*.

With this view, I could have wiſhed to have ſeen the church deſcribed in its ſtate of independence upon every human eſtabliſhment; veſted with thoſe ſpiritual powers which it poſſeſſes in itſelf; in the exerciſe of which, every individual ought to be go-

verned by the authority, from which alone thoſe powers are derived. This repreſentation might, in ſome degree, have tended to counteract that looſe way of thinking, which prevails upon this ſubject; which has ſent ſo many unauthoriſed, and, for the moſt part, it is to be feared, unqualified, individuals into the miniſtry; an evil, which, if it go on increaſing in the degree it has lately done, threatens more certain ruin to the eſtabliſhment of this country, than is, in my judgment, to be apprehended from any other cauſe.

What opinion the author in queſtion may have formed upon the nature and conſtitution of the Chriſtian church, it is not for me to determime. But that there is no part of his publication calculated to give the reader any diſcriminate idea upon this important ſubject, will not be deemed an hazardous aſſertion. There are ſome paſſages, on the contrary, which, if I miſtake not, may lead to an erroneous concluſion upon it.

In page 379, BAXTER is claſſed with HALL, BEVERIDGE, HOOKER, and ANDREWS, as "among the brighteſt ornaments and pillars of the church of England."*

* WILBERFORCE's Practical View, p. 379.

Whatever reſpect may be entertained for the character of BAXTER, as a ſtrenuous maintainer of the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity, (and in that character he is doubtleſs entitled to reſpect) nothing, it is preſumed, can be ſaid in favour either of his political principles, or his bigoted prejudices againſt the church of England; of which not one of thoſe venerable perſons above-mentioned would, I conceive, have admitted him to have been a *pillar*, or an *ornament*. In fact, when BAXTER flouriſhed, the church in this country, according to the idea here formed of it, was in a notorious ſtate of perſecution. The religion which at that time enjoyed the national ſupport, was the religion of *non-conformiſts*; of thoſe who, having ſeparated from the church, deſtroyed its government, plundered, and in many caſes murdered, its miniſters. The church eſtabliſhment, therefore, at that time, if we paſs over the impropriety of the term, was of a piece with that of the ſtate; it was an uſurpation of rights, of which the legal poſſeſſors had been forcibly deprived.

What our author ſays, therefore, in a note, (pages 379 and 380) that "BAXTER with his brethren were *ſhamefully ejected* from the church in 1666, in *violation of the royal word*, as well as of the *clear*

principles of juſtice," is what will not be readily admitted by thoſe who are acquainted with the hiſtory of the times, or the ſtate of facts.

The clear principles of juſtice require, that the parties who have ſuffered injury, ſhould receive the earlieſt poſſible redreſs. Had theſe principles prevailed at the Reſtoration, the ejection of non-conformiſt miniſters from the patrimony of the church, in favour of the epiſcopal clergy, to whom the rightful poſſeſſion belonged muſt have been the immediate conſequence of the re-eſtabliſhment of the conſtitution. But ſo far was this from being the caſe, that two years were ſuffered to elapſe, before any legal methods were taken to diſpoſſeſs them. To the credit of the then government, ſuch reſpect was entertained for the ſpiritual characters and abilities of many of the then miniſters, that all the means of argument and perſuaſion were made uſe of to retain them in the church. And it was not till a determined perſeverance in their prejudices againſt the form and government of the church, as it was then re-eſtabliſhed, rendered hopeleſs all accommodation upon the ſubject, that their rejection was ſuffered finally to take place. So that inſtead of ſaying, they "*were ſhamefully ejected from the church* in 1666, in violation of

the clear principles of juſtice," it ſhould be ſaid, that theſe miniſters ejected themſelves, becauſe they would not continue in the church upon any other condition, than that of its being faſhioned after their own model.

Nor does the charge reſpecting the violation of the royal word, upon this occaſion, appear to be ſtrictly juſtified by facts.

When a perſon does every thing that poſſibly can be done in his ſituation, towards the fulfilment of any promiſe, he ought not, in charity, to be made chargeable with its violation.

The King, in his declaration at Breda, promiſed liberty to tender conſciences; and that no man ſhould be diſquieted, or called in queſtion, for difference of opinion in matters of religion, which did not diſturb the peace of the kingdom; and that he would conſent to ſuch an Act of Parliament, as, upon mature deliberation, ſhould be offered to him for the full granting that indulgence. When the non-conformiſt divines afterwards waited on the King at the Hague, he told them, that he referred the ſettling all differences reſpecting religion to the wiſdom of Parliament; that the two Houſes were the beſt judges what indulgence, or toleration, were neceſſary for the repoſe of the kingdom. The King, therefore, by concurring

with his Parliament in this buſineſs, acted up to the full meaning of his declarations. But he did more than this. So diſpoſed was he to do every thing to gratify the non-conformiſts, that could be done conſiſtent with the re-eſtabliſhment of the epiſcopal church, that he even acted without his Parliament upon this occaſion; by publiſhing, with the advice of his Privy Council *only*, a declaration of indulgence in their favour; which the preſſing and repeated remonſtrance of the Commons obliged him afterwards to recal.

Though the King did therefore, immediately on his reſtoration, promiſe, that non-conformiſt miniſters ſhould not be ejected from ſequeſtered livings, where the epiſcopal incumbents were dead; in conſequence of which many remained in quiet poſſeſſion of their preferments; yet this promiſe cannot be ſaid to have been violated, becauſe the Act of Uniformity, which paſſed two years after, obliged thoſe who ſtill retained their prejudices againſt the form and government of the church, to retire out of it. And when it is conſidered upon what ground this Act was brought forward; that it was judged neceſſary, in conſequence of the non-conformiſt divines returning to their old ſeditious practice of inveighing againſt Government; and taking advantage of their public office, to bring

the minds of the people back to thoſe fatal errors, which had already proved ſo deſtructive; the paſſing it may be conſidered, not ſo much a breach of promiſe on the part of the King, as an act of prudential proviſion for public peace on the part of the Government.

That ſuch was the caſe, may be concluded from the ſpeech which the Chancellor made at the opening of the Parliamentby which this Act was paſſed; when ſpeaking of the ſeditious preachers of the day, he ſays, "that inſtead of repenting of any thing they had done amiſs, they repeated every day the ſame crimes, for the oblivion whereof the Act of Indemnity was paſſed. Theſe (ſays he) are the ſeditious preachers who cannot be contented to be diſpenſed with for their full obedience to ſome laws eſtabliſhed, without reproaching and inveighing againſt thoſe laws how eſtabliſhed ſoever; who tell their auditories, that the Apoſtle meant, when he bid them ſtand to their liberties, that they ſhould ſtand to their arms; and who, by repeating the very expreſſions, and teaching the very doctrines they ſet on foot in the year 1640, ſufficiently declare, that they have no mind that twenty years ſhould put an end to the miſeries we have undergone. What good Chriſtian can think without horror of theſe miniſters of the Goſpel, who by their

function ſhould be meſſengers of peace, and are in their practice the only trumpets of war, and incendiaries towards rebellion. And if the perſon and place can improve and aggravate the offence, as no doubt it does before GOD and men, methinks the preaching rebellion and treaſon out of the pulpit ſhould be as much worſe than the advancing it in the market, as poiſoning a man at the communion, would be worſe than killing him at a tavern."

It is not in charity to be ſuppoſed, that this account applied to the non-conformiſt miniſters in general. In this caſe, as in moſt others, it is probable, ſome few hot-headed imprudent individuals brought diſgrace upon the body. It is a circumſtance to be lamented, therefore, by all ſerious Chriſtians, that an Act ſhould be deemed neceſſary, which operated to the excluſion of ſo many pious and learned men from the church, as were doubtleſs to be found in the number of thoſe, whoſe prejudices would not permit them to continue in communion with it.

But of all the non-conformiſt miniſters ejected, BAXTER appears to have had the leaſt cauſe for complaint. He had diſtinguiſhed himſelf as a ſtrenuous ſupporter of the republican cauſe. He had even boaſted of his exploits againſt the king. In the

editions of his "Saints everlaſting Reſt," printed in the years 1649 and 1652, he tranſlated ſome of the regicides and other rebels, whom he has named, into heaven;* which he deſcribes, in compliment to the then ruling power, in the form of a *parliament*; calling it *parliamentum beatum*; though in the edition of this book printed in the year 1660 he thought it prudent to drop his ſaints out of heaven again. This CANONIZER OF REBEL SAINTS was, immediately upon the Reſtoration, made king's chaplain; and ſoon after tempted to remain in the church, by the offer of the biſhoprick of Hereford, which he rejected. And it was owing in a great degree to his invincible prejudices againſt the epiſcopal church as then eſtabliſhed, that all attempts at accommodation between the church and diſſenting divines were rendered fruitleſs. Biſhop MORLEY, who was one of the chief managers of the epiſcopal cauſe, complained of the frivolous and falſe manner of arguing made uſe of by BAXTER on the occaſion; that the ſceptical length to which he carried his objections againſt eccleſiaſtical inſtitutions, took away all legiſlative power, not only from church and ſtate, but even from GOD himſelf.

* BAXTER's "Saints everlaſting Reſt." Edit. 1649; p. 82, 83; where he names ſeveral of the rebels and regicides, as BROOK, PYM, HAMPDEN, and *WHITE*, who was one of the regicides, &c.

The repreſentation, therefore, which our author has given of the cauſe of the non-conformiſt miniſters, who, he ſays, "were ſhamefully ejected from the church, in violation of the royal word, and the clear principles of juſtice," appears calculated to diſpoſe the unwary reader to give more credit to that cauſe than it really deſerved; and not to do that juſtice to the oppoſite one, to which it was certainly entitled.

It was upon the ſame unſound ground, that CALAMY, in his life of BAXTER, attempted to prejudice the public mind in favour of his diſſenting brethren, by a repreſentation of their extraordinary ſufferings; to which we are indebted for a book* by WALKER, which will enable every impartial mind to hold the ſcale of judgment between the caſe of the perſecuted clergy of the church of England, who ſuffered for the royal cauſe, and that of the ejected non-conformiſt divines, the principal ſupporters of the oppoſite party; and determine for himſelf on which ſide the balance of juſtice and charity evidently turns.

There is no pleaſure in calling to mind circumſtances, which, it were to be wiſhed, had never found a place in the Engliſh hiſtory. But as there is

* WALKER's Sufferings of the Clergy.

always ſome danger attendant upon giving wrong names to either things or perſons, I have thought it neceſſary to ſay ſomething in anſwer to the note here objected to. By the learned reader, ſhould ſuch an one honour theſe papers with a peruſal, that may be paſſed over, which to a leſs informed one may be uſeful.

Had the author to whom I allude, repreſented *Baxter* and his ejected brethren in their character of pious and learned miniſters, the Chriſtian reader would have readily ſubſcribed to the poſition; and in common with every well-wiſher to the cauſe of religion, have lamented the exiſtence of thoſe unhappy prejudices which deprived the church of their miniſterial labours. But when theſe non-conformiſt miniſters are repreſented as *ornaments* and *pillars* of the *church of England*, ſuch a confuſion of ideas reſpecting the Chriſtian church are introduced, that we feel ourſelves obliged to call them,—what Hall, Beveridge, Hooker, Andrews, and every writer properly informed upon that ſubject muſt have called them,—ſeparatiſts from that branch of the church of Christ, eſtabliſhed in this country; and conſequently *ſchiſmatics*.

Should any additional authority be wanting to confirm this poſition, it may be taken from the opi-

nion of thoſe, who may be conſidered, as impartial bye-ſtanders, during the time that the points in diſpute between the epiſcopal clergy and non-conformiſt miniſters were in agitation.

The Biſhop of London, many years after the Reſtoration, in the charitable hope of bringing back the diſſenting miniſters into the boſom of the church, wrote to ſeveral of the then moſt eminent divines of the foreign proteſtant churches, to obtain their judgment of the controverſy ſubſiſting between the nonconformiſts and the church of England. The anſwer of all was deciſive in favour of the church of England. But that which was received from the celebrated Monſieur CLAUDE, beſide the general good ſenſe which it contains, ſpeaks ſo fully to the point before us, that the inſertion of it will be pardoned by the reader, upon the conſideration of its leading o a deciſive concluſion upon this ſubject.

" I could wiſh (ſaid he, alluding to the independents) that thoſe who fly out ſo far, as to think of nothing leſs than coming to an abſolute rupture, and throwing off all dependence and ſubordination, in order to give every particular congregation a ſort of ſovereign government; I could wiſh theſe people would thoroughly conſider, whether their ſcheme be

not a direct contradiction to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, which is a ſpirit of union and ſocial correſpondence, and not of diviſion. That they would conſider, that though the principle of the reformed churches will by no means ſuffer men ſhould have dominion over their faith, and govern the conſcience at diſcretion; and that ſuch arbitrary and implicit methods are deſtructive to religion; that notwithſtanding this, it does by no means follow, that it is lawful for Chriſtians to take check at diſcipline, to throw off the yoke of government, and deprive themſelves of thoſe aſſiſtances which are the conſequences of general union; and that ſuch a ſubordination in the parts of this ſpiritual ſociety is very ſerviceable to ſecure orthodox belief, and regular practice. And laſtly, I deſire they would conſider, that the ſame reaſon which makes them inſiſt upon the independence of one congregation upon another, will carry them much further than they deſire; and may be made uſe of to break the union of particular congregations, and make every ſingle perſon in dependent of each other. For one congregation has no more right to claim an independency of other congregations, than one ſingle perſon has to ſet up himſelf independent of others in the ſame congregation. This principle, therefore, muſt of neceſ-

ſity deſtroy all diſcipline; throw the church, as far as in us lies, into a horrible confuſion; and expoſe the heritage of our LORD to the reproach of the adverſaries.

"As for thoſe among you," continues this celebrated writer, "who are called Preſbyterians; though, I perſuade myſelf, they are not unfurniſhed with knowledge, judgment, and zeal, yet I could wiſh, with all my heart, they had ſhewn more temper in reſenting the ſcandal, they fancy has formerly been given by the biſhops; and that they had diſtinguiſhed the order from the men. Perſons in public ſtations are not only liable to miſcarriage, but it may happen that the moſt holy and conſiderable functions are ſometimes managed by ill people; and in this caſe, both reaſon and religion will tell us, that the miniſter and the employment ought not to be intermixt and thrown together. And ſince at preſent, by the bleſſing of GOD, there is no ſuch pretence for diſguſt, and that my lords the biſhops are remarkable for their piety, their zeal, and conſtancy to their religion; I hope the advantage of their example will have a good effect upon the generality, compoſe the minds of thoſe formerly diſaffected, and ſweeten their diſpoſition. Beſides, the Diſſenters ſhould pleaſe to

conſider, that if the epiſcopal government be attended with ſome inconveniences, as I do not queſtion but it may be; ſo on the other ſide, the Preſbyterian conſtitution is not without very great diſadvantages. No order or function, where mortal men have the management of it, is exempt from inconveniences. *Equality* among the miniſtry is ſubject to blemiſhes and exceſſes, no leſs than ſuperiority. The ſafeſt and moſt prudent conduct, therefore, is not to run from one ſettlement to another, nor to hazard the ſhaking the whole frame in hopes of a better conſtitution, though we had both authority and power to make ſuch an experiment. Prudence, juſtice, and Chriſtian charity, will by no means give us leave to puſh the point thus far, and venture on ſuch dangerous extremities, only for a different form of government. The beſt expedient is to endeavour the drawing towards a temper, and leſſen as much as may be, the inconveniencies we are afraid of, and not to have recourſe to violent remedies. My Lord, I make no ſcruple to call the ſetting up private meetings, declining the public congregations, and withdrawing themſelves from your lordſhip's government, violent remedies. Such practice is apparently no better than a *formal ſchiſm;* a crime in its own nature

hateful to GOD and men; and for which both thoſe who ſet it up, and thoſe who encourage it, muſt expect to give an account at the great day."

There is ſtill one remaining paſſage in the publication before me, to which, as it puts the unity of the Chriſtian church quite out of ſight, I think it neceſſary to ſay a few words.

Among the concluding hints which this author gives for the practical direction of true Chriſtians, we find the following one; which, from the liberal and philanthropic ſpirit that it breathes, is well calculated to gain credit in a world, uninſtructed, as the preſent is, upon the ſubject to which it belongs. "Let true Chriſtians," ſays our author, "cultivate a Catholic ſpirit of univerſal good-will, and of amicable fellowſhip towards all thoſe, of whatever ſect or denomination, who, differing from them in *non-eſſentials*, agree with them in the grand fundamentals of religion."*

The good contained in this ſentence appears in ſo queſtionable a ſhape, that an apprehenſion of the evil which may be derived from it by the uninformed Chriſtian, leads me to conclude, that the author could not ſee it, in the light in which it will be ſeen by many readers. Whilſt, therefore, I honour the general

* WILBERFORCE, p. 487.

ſentiment, I muſt beg leave to ſtate my objections to the wording of ſome part of it, when conſidered as drawing out a line of practical conduct for the Chriſtian.

There is no fallacy by which common underſtandings are ſo readily impoſed upon, as that by which a propoſition of acknowledged truth in its proper and reſtrained ſenſe is made to miniſter to a general and unlimited concluſion. Inqueſtions of nice diſcrimination, the far greater part of mankind, "whoſe ſenſes are not exerciſed to diſcern between good and evil," Heb. v. 14, are not poſſeſſed of ability ſufficient to qualify them to draw the line between what is and what is not to be admitted. Propoſitions which bring immediate conviction to the mind, from the evident truth contained in them, are readily embraced; whilſt at the ſame time little or no attention is paid to the limitations by which thoſe ſelf-evident propoſitions are neceſſarily bounded. Hence it is, that a confuſion of judgment, upon the moſt important ſubjects, ofttimes prevails in the minds of uninformed people, unfavourable to the cauſe of truth: when the admiſſion of one propoſition in an *unlimited* ſenſe comprehends under it the rejection of another, which ſtands upon an equally firm foundation. In this caſe, they either determine upon a wrong concluſion, which

neceſſarily leads to error; or in conſequence of their remaining poiſed between two apparently oppoſite poſitions, which they know not how to reconcile, they are in that ſtate of uncertainty which leads to no concluſion at all.

In proportion, therefore, to the importance of the ſubject, ſhould be the attention paid to the preciſe boundaries, within which every poſition, however incontrovertible in itſelf, ought to be confined; that no opening may be left for a general concluſion to be drawn, to the proper eſtabliſhment of which other circumſtances may be neceſſary to be taken into the account.

The propoſition here alluded to is that by which a reader may be led to conclude, that provided the faith of the Chriſtian be ſound, provided he hold the grand fundamentals of religion, other conſiderations are not ſubjects of eſſential importance to him.

Upon what is to be underſtood by the *grand fundamentals* of religion there is no queſtion. Where theſe are not admitted, there can be no Chriſtianity. This is a poſition in which all who receive the Goſpel muſt agree. But though there can be no Chriſtianity, where the grand fundamentals of religion are not admitted, it does not follow, that where theſe are

admitted, there remains no other ſubject of eſſential importance, to which the Chriſtian need pay attention.

It may be aſked, is every thing relating to the church of CHRIST to be deemed *non-eſſential*, ſave what reſpects the profeſſion of its peculiar doctrines? Such a concluſion, it is preſumed, will lead the Chriſtian reader further than the author meant. For upon this ſuppoſition, that every thing but the grand fundamentals of religion is a matter of no eſſential importance; the concluſion which the generality of readers will draw from the ſentence under conſideration will be this; that provided *they believe* what as Chriſtians they muſt believe, it is a matter of no conſequence what form of religious worſhip they adopt; whether they hold communion *with the church*, or the *meeting-houſe*; in other words, whether they aſſemble as members of the church of CHRIST, or as members of a ſchiſmatic congregation.

The admiſſion of this idea cuts up by the roots the unity of the Chriſtian church; and makes what the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians wrote upon this ſubject ſomething worſe than nonſenſe; for in this caſe they impoſed on their fellow-Chriſtians, by making matters in themſelves *indifferent* ſubjects of very important conſideration.

In ſhort, this inter-communion (if we may ſo ſay) between the church and the conventicle, ſo utterly inconſiſtent with the regular œconomy of Divine grace, can never lead to good. It muſt ultimately deſtroy the cauſe it is meant to ſerve. To point out its danger, we have only to aſk, whether it be not poſſible for Chriſtians to profeſs the true faith, and yet by *diſobedience* to loſe all the benefits expected from it? If ſo, there is, doubtleſs, ſomething of *eſſential* importance with the Chriſtian, beſides the acknowledgment of the fundamentals of Chriſtianity.

KORAH and his company were ſwallowed up, not for any error in faith, but for diſobedience of practice; not becauſe they diſbelieved any of the eſtabliſhed doctrines of the Jewiſh church, but becauſe they rebelled againſt the Divine ordinance in its eſtabliſhment.

It was not for their renunciation of the faith, but for their ſeparation from the church, that ST. PAUL, ST. CLEMENT, and ST. IGNATIUS, in their addreſſes to the primitive Chriſtians, expreſſed themſelves ſo ſtrongly and decidedly upon the ſubject of eccleſiaſtical unity; that it is impoſſible, one ſhould ſuppoſe, for an unprejudiced reader of their writings, to harbour a doubt upon this ſubject.

Upon what ground, then, are we to conclude, that conformity to the eſtabliſhed government of the church, which in the primitive days conſtituted a ſubject of the firſt magnitude, is now dwindled down into an unimportant conſideration? Can any thing which has received the ſanction of the Divine inſtitution in religion be deemed a *non-eſſential?* Can, for inſtance, the Divine inſtitution of the Chriſtian church become at any time a matter of *no importance?* Can the rule given by the Apoſtle to the members of that church, in conſequence of its Divine eſtabliſhment, reſpecting their obedience and ſubmiſſion to the ſpiritual authority of their appointed governors,* become a matter of indifference to the profeſſors of CHRIST's religion? Can the cultivation of Chriſtian charity, that bond of perfectneſs, as it is called; that Chriſtian grace, which the eſtabliſhment of the church was in a particular manner deſigned to promote among men; in ſpeaking of religious practice, can this be deemed a *non-eſſential?*

Our author, it will be urged, means no ſuch thing. It ſhall be readily allowed that he does not. On the contrary, that he directs true Chriſtians "to cultivate

* HEB. xiii. 17.

a Catholic ſpirit of univerſal good-will and amicable fellowſhip towards all, of whatever ſect or denomination," &c.

Had we no experience in human affairs, did we know nothing of the corrupt creature man, we ſhould pay attention to a direction ſo well calculated to harmonize a jarring world. But as man is, it is a direction irreducible to practice upon any plan, but that which has been laid down by GOD for the purpoſe. GOD knew what was in man. He knew that what ought to be the ſtrongeſt cement of affection and brotherly kindneſs, would, through the corruption of his nature, be made the ground of animoſity, hatred, and revenge. He ſaw, when on earth, in the caſe of the Samaritans, a ſtriking inſtance of the fatal effect produced by a difference of opinion in religious matters upon the harmony of ſociety. The remedy which he provided againſt it was the inſtitution of a church, in which all mankind ſhould be brought together "in the unity of the ſame ſpirit, to worſhip the ſame GOD in the bond of peace."

Such is the idea ſo ſtrongly inculcated by the Apoſtle, in his epiſtle to the Romans; where he directs the members of the church "to follow after the things which make for peace, and things where-

with one may edify another."* "Now the GOD of patience and conſolation," ſays he, "grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to the will of JESUS CHRIST, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify GOD the Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."† "Let the peace of GOD rule in your hearts, to the which alſo ye are called in one body."‡

The peace preſcribed to Chriſtians, and intended as a bleſſing to them, is here deſcribed by the Apoſtle as the end of their vocation, and of their being united *into one body*. If then the end of Chriſtians being united *into one body, the church*, be the production of peace among them; the moſt probable conſequence of their being broken into ſects and parties will be the deſtruction of it. Had it not been for the ſake of peace and love, and the great bleſſings which attend them, GOD might have let Chriſtians live in different bodies, as well as in one; and exerciſe their religion in oppoſite churches, as well as in churches agreeing in the ſame communion. But the reaſon why He hath enjoined Chriſtians to unite into one body and communion, was to put them into a bleſſed ſtate of

* ROM. xiv. 17. † Ibid. xv. 5, 6. ‡ COL. iii. 15.

Catholic peace and love; for promoting the happineſs of mankind, and the honour of his holy name. Could this perfection of Chriſtianity have been brought about in any other way; to uſe our author's words, could the fundamentals of religion have been preſerved in the world, and "a Catholic ſpirit of univerſal good-will, and amicable fellowſhip," have been kept alive among men in any other way, than by their joint communion in religious worſhip; it is probable, that the inſtitution of the Chriſtian church, as a ſociety under an appropriate government, had never taken place.

To talk, therefore, of nothing being of *eſſential* conſideration with the Chriſtian diſciple, but the profeſſion of the true faith, is to propagate a doctrine, as unknown to the church of CHRIST, as it is contradicted by the experience of the world. For conformity to the appointed government of the church is not only a matter of importance to the Chriſtian, as it is an obedience to the Divine will; but it is moreover a ſubject neceſſary to be attended to by him, upon the very ground pointed out by our author; becauſe it eſſentially contributes to the promotion and preſervation of thoſe very objects which he has particularly in view. "The church," the Apoſtle tells

us, "is the ground and pillar of the truth."* One of the ends of its inſtitution was, that, by eſtabliſhing a ſtandard of judgment in religious matters, it might be the guardian and preſerver of the Chriſtian faith; that Chriſtians might "not be toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But ſpeaking the truth in love, they might grow up into him, in all things, which is the head, even CHRIST: From whom the whole body (of the church) fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the body, unto the edifying of itſelf in love."† And experience, as it has been above obſerved, has abundantly convinced us, that corruptions of the faith among Chriſtians are, ſooner or later, the conſequences of their ſeparation from this body thus *fitly framed.*

* "Quibus verbis ſignificat PAULUS, ne intercidat veritas DEI in mundo, eccleſiam eſſe fidam ejus cuſtodem: quia ejus miniſterio et operâ voluit DEUS puram verbi ſui prædicationem conſervari et ſe nobis oſtendere patrem familiâs, dum nos ſpiritualibus alimentis paſcit, et quæcunque ad ſalutem noſtram faciunt, procurat."

CALV. Inſt. l. iv. c. 1.

† Epheſ. iv. 14, 15.

The unity of the church, therefore, as inſtrumental in preſerving the grand fundamentals of Chriſtianity in the world, muſt on that account be a ſubject of *eſſential* importance to the Chriſtian.

It muſt alſo be ſeen in the ſame light, when we regard its direct tendency to produce that Catholic ſpirit of good-will, which conſtitutes the great bleſſing of ſociety, and which will in vain be expected from any other cauſe.

"I know," ſays a learned writer,* than whom no one was better acquainted with the ſubject before us, "that men will now ſay, that they can love all parties, and that they can live without animoſities towards all ſorts of men; but if a few men can be ſo perfect, what is that to the generality of mankind, who will ſtill be divided in affections as they are in parties and communions; as has been found by woeful experience, not only in this church, but all the churches where diviſions have been ſince the time of CHRIST. Wherefore, generally ſpeaking, it muſt needs follow, that oppoſition in communions will breed partiality and oppoſition in affections among Chriſtians. Where particular perſons, or congregations, ſeparate from any church as corrupt, there muſt needs be bitter

* HICKES's Poſthumous Sermons.

ſtrife and envyings between that church who will juſtify herſelf, and the ſeparatiſts who will maintain their ſeparation; and in ſuch contentions for the truth, Chriſtian charity and diſcipline will decay, and utter licentiouſneſs and atheiſm and all manner of hereſies will ſpring up. Theſe are the reaſons into which the precepts for unity, and the ſtrictures againſt diviſion in the Chriſtian religion are reſolved: and I am perſuaded, were the benefits of the one, and the direful effects of the other, well conſidered, by thoſe who hold oppoſite communions to this church, they would be as zealous for the poſitive precepts of Chriſtian union, as for the moſt weighty duties of the moral law."

It may be remembered, that the Jews and Samaritans agreed in the eſſentials of religion. But the ſeparation of the latter from the worſhip at Jeruſalem, and the ſetting up diſtinct altars of their own, were circumſtances which operated ſo ſtrongly upon the minds of the reſpective parties, as effectually to deſtroy all ſocial intercourſe between them.

It may be remembered, alſo, that the two principal ſects among the Jews (the Phariſees and Sadducees) were engaged in a kind of ceaſeleſs hoſtility with each other, during the whole time of their exiſtence. So irreconcilable was their mutual enmity, that they

choſe rather to periſh in their diviſion, than to unite in oppoſition to their common foes.

If we come down to later times, the conduct of the Puritans towards each other after their emigration to America, together with the ſpirit of intolerance manifeſted by the contending ſectaries in the laſt century, leads to a ſimilar concluſion upon this ſubject. Whilſt the railing accuſations continually brought againſt the eſtabliſhed clergy, together with the indecent language in theſe days ſo laviſhly beſtowed upon them, by thoſe ſelf-conſtituted teachers, who nevertheleſs profeſs themſelves to be diſciples of the ſame Maſter; will not allow us to hope for better things, than have heretofore been experienced from the uncontroled paſſions of the natural man.

To lead men, therefore, to think, that a Catholic ſpirit of univerſal good-will and amicable fellowſhip, may be kept up among thoſe of different ſects and perſuaſions in religion, is to induce them to act upon an imaginary idea unſupported by facts; whilſt they hold themſelves indifferent to the plan which God has provided, for the certain attainment of that deſirable object. Let us not fancy men to be more charitably diſpoſed than they really are, and thereby flatter them into ſchiſm. Charity, be it remembered,

is the offspring, not of *nature*, but of *grace*. Let us, therefore, rather tell men what they are; and uſe our utmoſt endeavours to perſuade them to make uſe of the means calculated to make them what they ought to be. The unity of the Chriſtian church will as certainly lead to a Catholic ſpirit of good-will and amicable fellowſhip, as does the diviſion of it to the oppoſite diſpoſition. To imagine that this characteriſtic of true Chriſtianity, will be found among men left to the guidance of their own fancies and paſſions in religion, is to be wiſe above what is written; is to forſake the paths of truth and knowledge, and flatter ourſelves that we ſhall find comfort in thoſe of confuſion and error.

Whilſt, therefore, it is impoſſible but to look up with reſpect to the author before me, I nevertheleſs muſt think, that the effectual advancement of Chriſtianity, and the conſequent ſecurity of its benefits to the world, will ever depend upon a conformity to the plan laid down by GOD for that purpoſe. Conſequently, the more attention is paid to the unity of the Chriſtian church, conſidered as a ſociety of Divine inſtitution, the more of true Chriſtian faith and charity will be found in the world.

Upon this ground I would ſuggeſt it to the conſideration of thoſe members of the church to whom I now addreſs myſelf, who regard the eſtabliſhment of the church in this country as an object of great national importance; whether, by their occaſional attendance upon irregular teachers, who hold themſelves independent of it, they would wiſh to become inſtrumental to the deſtruction of the cauſe they profeſs to have at heart. Whether they are not actually placing themſelves in that predicament, when, by their influence and example, they convey an idea into the minds of the people, abſolutely deſtructive of one great end of the Divine inſtitution of a church, by leading them to conclude, that it is a matter of no conſequence whether they continue in communion with it or not. I would entreat them by the love of CHRIST to conſider, whether the doctrine which they may hear out of the church, will balance againſt what they loſe by their ſeparation from it? Putting the nature of the Chriſtian miniſtry, as a commiſſion, out of the queſtion; whether the partial good that may be done by a certain individual, to whoſe miniſtry they have attached themſelves, in conſequence of the good opinion to which his character may have entitled him, will compenſate to the community for

the general evil derived from that violation of order, which, in the appointment to a moſt important office, removes the line of diſtinction neceſſary to be drawn between the *real* and *imaginary* qualifications of different parties. For is it not more than probable, that the evil, in this caſe, will be found to outweigh the good, in the proportion that vain pretenders to knowledge exceed in number thoſe who really poſſeſs it?

But upon the conſideration that all order in this matter proceeds from GOD, (the Apoſtle having told us, in reference to the prieſthood, "that no man taketh this honour to himſelf, but he that is called of GOD, as was Aaron," Heb. v. 4.; and that, as man, JESUS CHRIST himſelf proceeded in the diſcharge of the Chriſtian prieſthood by commiſſion;) I would conjure them, by the obedience which they owe to the Head of the church, to conſider, whether their diſregard of an eſtabliſhment calculated to promote peace and unity among Chriſtians, may not provoke GOD to deprive them of a bleſſing which they thus appear to undervalue. Whether this taking the cauſe, as it were, into their own hand, and upon the ground of occaſional defect in the miniſters of the church, running into an open breach of order in contempt of a Divine inſtitution, be ſo likely a way

to correct the evil complained of, as leaving the cauſe in GOD's hand, continuing dutiful members of his church, praying for its miniſters, and by converſation, writing, and example, endeavouring to re-animate them to a more ſpiritual diſcharge of their truſt.*

"It is ſafeſt" (ſays an old writer) "to truſt GOD with his own cauſes. If AARON had been choſen by *Iſrael*, MOSES would have ſheltered him under *their* authority. Now that *GOD* did immediately appoint him, his patronage is ſought, whoſe the election was. We may eaſily err in the managing of Divine affairs, and ſo our want of ſucceſs cannot want ſin. GOD knows how to uſe, how to bleſs his own means."

It ſhould be remembered, then, that there is no excuſe for ſeparating from a church, where the word of GOD is preached, and the ſacraments duly admi-

* "Cogitent in magnâ multitudine complures eſſe verè ſanctos et innocentes coram oculis DOMINI, qui aſpectum ſuum fugiant. Cogitent, et ex iis qui morbidi videntur, multos eſſe, qui in vitiis ſuis nequaquam ſibi placent aut blandiuntur; ſed ſerio timore DOMINI identidem expergefacti, ad integritatem majorem adſpirant. Cogitent non ferendum eſſe de homine judicium ab uno facto; quando ſanctiſſimi interdum graviſſimo caſu excidunt. Cogitent plus ſubeſſe ad colligendam eccleſiam momenti, tum verbi miniſterio, tum ſacrorum myſteriorum participatione, quam ut quorundam impiorum culpâ, vis illa tota evaneſcere queat. Poſtremò reputent, in cenſendâ eccleſiâ pluris eſſe *divinum* quam *humanum* judicium."

CALV. Inſtit. lib. iv. c. 1.

niſtered; becauſe, as it has been above obſerved, the efficacy of the ſervice and ſacraments of the church does not depend upon the private character of the officiating miniſter: and as there is no excuſe for ſeparation under ſuch circumſtances, ſo neither can there be any advantage derived from it. Piouſly-diſpoſed perſons may certainly be as pious in the church as they can be out of it; and it is the deſign of our church, that all its members ſhould be ſuch. It may be a ſubject, therefore, well worth conſideration, whether the practice ſo frequently adopted by ſerious perſons, of ſeparating from a church which furniſhes the moſt effectual means of promoting the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, may not be traced to the artifice of that grand Deceiver, whoſe buſineſs it is at all times and by all means to prevent, as much as in him lies, the ſucceſs of the Chriſtian miniſtry: and, under this head, whether the idea which is now taken up by Chriſtians of a certain deſcription, relative to a ſuppoſed diſtinction between the *church of* CHRIST and *church of England*, be not employed by him, by way of prelude to their more eaſy ſeparation from church communion. Upon thoſe pious perſons who are on the point of being led captive by ſuch a fatal deluſion, the ſtrong language of Biſhop HALL will

produce more effects, at the ſame time that it will be better received, than any thing I can hope to ſay upon the ſubject. "The GOD of the church (ſays this pious biſhop) cannot abide either conventicles of ſeparation, or pluralities of profeſſions. This flouriſhing church of Great-Britain (after all the ſpiteful calumniations of malicious men) is one of the moſt conſpicuous members of the Catholic church upon earth; ſo we, in her communion, do make up one body with the holy patriarchs, prophets, apoſtles, martyrs, confeſſors, and faithful Chriſtians of all ages and times. We ſucceed in their faith, we glory in their ſucceſſion, we triumph in this glory. Whither go ye, then, ye weak, ignorant, ſeduced ſouls, that run to ſeek this dove in a foreign cote? She is here, if ſhe have any reſt under heaven." Serm. on Cant. vi. 9.

To the foregoing important conſiderations, let it be added, that every repreſentation of the clergy of this church, which tends to leſſen their influence upon the community, does injury to the general cauſe. For this reaſon, it becomes neceſſary to ſeparate, as far as may be, the office from the man; and not to diſregard the ordinance of GOD, becauſe it has been occaſionally diſgraced. And this diſ-

tinction between the public and private character of the teacher, our SAVIOUR has taught us to make, in the direction given to his disciples respecting their conduct towards the Scribes and Pharisees, who were at that time notorious for moral depravity. "The Scribes and Pharisees (said he) sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." MATT. xxiii. 2, 3. Though the ministers of the church, therefore, ought to be, and would to GOD they all were, burning and shining lights to the world; yet it must be remembered, they are men. "They have received this treasure in earthen vessels," as men of like passions with those to whom they are sent. As men, therefore, they will have their personal defects. But as their personal defects do not, through Divine grace, vacate the object of their commission, "any thing (according to the observation made by DIONYSIUS to NOVATIAN*) must rather be borne, than that we should rend the church of GOD." A proper distinction, therefore, should always be made between the clergy and the church. For if well-meaning pious

* "Oportebat quidem nihil non ferre, ne ecclesiam DEI scinderes." DION. Epist. ad NOVAT. vide EUSEB. lib. viii. c. 44.

Chriſtians are to leave the church, becauſe there are ſome miniſters who do no credit to their office in it; it may be difficult to ſay, when ſuch a thing as unity could be found in it; ſince there never was a time from the days of the Apoſtles, when ſuch a cauſe for ſeparation did not in a greater or leſs degree exiſt.

ST. CYPRIAN ſets forth the corruption of an early age of the church in the following melancholy ſtrain: "The diſcipline (ſays he) which the Apoſtles left us, was corrupted with idleneſs and a long reſt. Every one's care was to increaſe his eſtate; and quite forgetting either what the believers had done in the Apoſtles' days, or what it was always their duty to do, they gave themſelves up to an inſatiable covetouſneſs, and laboured for nothing but to get wealth. There was no devotion in their prieſts, no charity ſhewed in good works, not ſo much as the form of godlineſs in their behaviour." Yet ST. CYPRIAN was ſo far from thinking that this ſhameful degeneracy of the clergy furniſhed an argument for ſeparation from the church, that he was one of the ſtrongeſt advocates for the preſervation of Chriſtian unity.

When the prophet ſaid, (MAL. ii. 7) "The lips of the prieſts ſhould keep knowledge, and they

ſhould ſeek the law at his mouth, for he is the meſſenger of the LORD of Hoſts;" it was at a time, when the Jewiſh church was in the moſt degenerate ſtate; when the prieſts, as he afterwards tells them, "had departed out of the way, had cauſed many to ſtumble at the law, and had corrupted the covenant of LEVI."

The reader will not ſuppoſe, that it is our wiſh to ſhelter the preſent degeneracy of the clergy under that of their predeceſſors in any former ſtage of the church. The only concluſion meant to be drawn from the foregoing circumſtances is ſimply this; that the miniſters of the church are to be regarded in their public character, as "the meſſengers of the LORD of Hoſts," "the ambaſſadors for CHRIST;" as bearing a commiſſion, which, though at times unworthily diſcharged, demands conſideration from the reſpect due to the Being from whom it is derived; and that the cauſe of the maſter ought not to be affected by the unworthineſs of the ſervant.*

* In the courſe of the great rebellion, when the people were deluded to believe they could not ſet up the kingdom of CHRIST without pulling down that of their ſovereign; among other tranſactions, we are told of an officer belonging to the rebels, who, after ſome ſkirmiſh, being taken priſoner with his party by the royaliſts, was modeſtly aſked by one of them, "How it came to paſs, that a

Were this argument managed with ſkill equal to its importance, it would, with GOD's bleſſing upon it, put an end to all difference of opinion upon this ſubject. The errors into which many men have run in conſequence of their ignorance of the nature of the Chriſtian church; of their having conſidered it, not as a ſociety *made for man*, but ſomething left for man *to make for himſelf;* (like a lump of ſhapeleſs wax, to be moulded according to every one's faſhion) would be corrected; and the object of that grand enemy of all religion, whoſe cauſe derives advantage from diviſion among Chriſtians, would be in a great meaſure defeated. Nothing is wanting to do juſtice to the cauſe of the church, as a ſociety of CHRIST's

gentleman of his ſeemingly good ſenſe and education could be induced to engage in a cauſe ſo very unjuſt?" His reply was; "He had not ſo ſtrictly examined the merit of the cauſe, as now he was convinced he ought; but one thing he could not but mention, that had prejudiced him (and he believed a great many more) againſt his Majeſty's ſervice, was the licence taken among the cavaliers of ſwearing and drinking." The anſwer to this was; "Admitting the charge were true, it was highly unpardonable ſo excellent a prince as his Majeſty ſhould ſuffer for the irregularities of his ſoldiers; and beſides, he ought farther to have conſidered, the crimes he mentioned were entirely *perſonal*, and the vices of *men:* whereas the malice, treachery, hypocriſy, and ſeveral other unparalleled vices, which made up the very eſſence of *his* cauſe, were the vices of devils."

forming, but an unprejudiced mind, an honeſt heart, and a competent acquaintance with primitive Chriſtianity. A *bright ornament** of our church, who poſſeſſed theſe qualifications in an eminent degree, has ſpoken ſo ſtrongly and ſo plainly upon the ſubject to which I am now alluding, that every conſiderate man will at leaſt pauſe before he ventures to ſet at nought ſuch authority. "I would not (ſays he) be an heretick, or a ſchiſmatick in the church, to have the wiſdom of SOLOMON, the tongues of ST. PAUL, and the eloquence of APOLLOS; no not to be caught up into Paradiſe, and hear thoſe unutterable things. I would not be the beſt preacher that ever was, and ſpeak in the pulpit by inſpiration, to have that accuſation lie againſt me, which ST. PAUL drew up againſt the Corinthians,—of envy, ſtrife, ſchiſm." Elſewhere ſpeaking of thoſe ſpiritual gifts, which, through the vanity of their poſſeſſors, heretofore diſturbed the peace of the church of Corinth, he thus admirably expreſſes himſelf: "Gifts, (ſays he) whether *real* or *pretended*, whether natural, acquired, or inſpired, are temptations to pride and apoſtacy, rather than ſecurity from them; witneſs LUCIFER in heaven; ADAM in paradiſe; and So-

* HICKES.

LOMON, who for his exceeding wisdom was styled the wise. So that no comparison ought to be made betwixt the excellency of knowledge and grace, and betwixt the intellectual and saving gifts of the Spirit; or between the gifts of the Spirit that make us wise, and learned, and fluent talkers, and those which make us good.

"It is better to be humble, than to be a prophet; it is better to be righteous, than to have the faith of miracles; and it is better to be holy, than to have the gift of tongues. But, to be peaceable and love union, is as great a grace, as to be humble, righteous, and holy; nay, as to be pure and temperate. For it is equalled with all those, and many other of the prime graces in the New Testament; it is reckoned with many of them among the fruits of the Spirit; and the fruits of the Spirit are better and more desirable than the gifts of it. The gifts of it may improve the conformity of my soul after the *metaphysical* image of God, in knowledge and wisdom; which the apostate spirits retain. But these are the fruits of it, as love, joy, peaceableness, &c. which conform my soul after his moral image, and make me partaker of his moral excellencies and perfections, and which alone can qualify my spirit for his presence

and acceptance; when many inſpired men, and many more enthuſiaſts who think themſelves inſpired, ſhall be ſhut out of the kingdom of GOD: as for other ſins, ſo eſpecially, for diſturbing the peace, and rending the unity of the church.

"Wherefore, if we lived in the age of miracles; or if GOD, to confute the infidelity of atheiſts, or to convert the Mahometans, or for any other reaſons, ſhould now renew the gifts of his ſpirit; in ſubmiſſion to his good pleaſure, I ſhould beg, with the prophet JEREMIAH, to be excuſed from all intellectual inſpirations, from viſions and revelations, and prophecy; from the gift of tongues and diſcerning ſpirits, and preaching and praying by immediate inſpiration. Inſtead of theſe gifts which fail, and which are good or bad, as the man is that receives them, I would beg him, for the ſake of JESUS, to inſpire me with the graces of his ſpirit, which never fail; with humility, temperance, purity, juſtice, and charity; for every one of theſe ſurpaſſeth all underſtanding, and the knowledge of all myſteries; more eſpecially would I beſeech him to grant me his peace, or inſpire me with the love of union, which ſurpaſſeth all underſtanding, and would keep my heart and mind from

envyings and ſtrife, and from making or fomenting needleſs diviſions, through JESUS CHRIST my Lord."

An attempt to add to the force of the above excellent paſſages, would be preſumption. They are, therefore, left to produce their own effect upon the reader's mind, who, if unacquainted, as moſt probably he is, with the writings of *this great divine*, will thank me for producing thus at length a quotation from him, which breathes the true Chriſtian ſpirit in ſo eminent a degree.

To prevent miſconſtruction, it remains only to be obſerved, that what a ſincere regard for genuine Chriſtianity, accompanied with an earneſt wiſh to promote the unity of the Chriſtian church, has induced me, in a former part of this diſcourſe, to ſay, in apparent contradiction to a writer, who has lately favoured the world with his religious ſentiments; muſt be conſidered, as ſaid againſt the meaning, which may be drawn from certain unguarded paſſages in his publication, rather than againſt that of their author. So much reſpect is due to this amiable author for the deſign of his undertaking, that it would give me pleaſure to think, that what has been here written, might prove the means of putting his publication into the hand of one additional reader;

becauſe ſo much of good is contained in it, that the reader muſt be either good or bad in the extreme, who does not derive benefit from it.

Feeling with the Critic,* "that an extra official exhortation to that renovation of mind which conſtitutes the characteriſtic of the true Chriſtian, aſſiſted by the credit of this author's ſituation, the juſt and general confidence in the worth and ſincerity of his character, the clearneſs of his intellect, and the force of his eloquence, will produce a more extenſive, and on many minds a more powerful effect, than any inſtruction from the pulpit, or even from the pen of a divine;" I feel earneſtly deſirous of contributing to ſo important an object.

Before I conclude this poſtſcript, however, I could wiſh (if it may be done without offence, and where no offence is meant, none ſhould be taken) to recall to the particular attention of this reſpectable author ſome few conſiderations.

In his late publication he has pronounced a general condemnation upon the profeſſional character of the Clergy of the eſtabliſhed church. By wiſe and candid men, a general and indiſcriminate condemnation will be ſeen in a light, in which this author, if we

* Brit. Critic, for Sept. 1797.

may judge of him from ſome parts of his work, would be very unwilling that his ſentiments ſhould appear. Conſidered, in its reference to the Clergy as a body, his ſentence is certainly not leſs impolitic, than unjuſt. It is unjuſt, becauſe unſupported by facts. It is impolitic, becauſe it muſt prove detrimental to the conſtitution of this country; by alienating the minds of the community from that branch of it, which has always been regarded as its firmeſt ſupport.

The utmoſt credit will be readily given to this author for his good intention. Upon this head I believe the opinion of the public is not leſs honourable than it is decided. But convinced, as I am, that the church of CHRIST has been ever an *Epiſcopal church*; and that a ſeparation from its communion has been, what it always will be, the fruitful ſource of hereſy* and uncharitableneſs, and conſequently one of the greateſt misfortunes that has ever happened to the Chriſtian world; it is impoſſible to look with indifference upon that growing prevalence of *ſectarianiſm*, which marks the character of the preſent day.

* "Inde ſchiſmata et hæreſes oborta ſunt et oriuntur, dum epiſcopus, qui unus eſt, et eccleſiæ præeſt ſuperbâ quorumnam præſumptione, contemnitur: et homo dignatione DEI honoratus, indignus hominibus judicatur." CYPRIAN, Epiſt. 69.

Our author would be conſidered to be a profeſſed friend to our happy eſtabliſhment. No one can feel more diſpoſed to ſee him in that light than myſelf. At the ſame time, I truſt, it will not be regarded as any intentional impeachment, either of his integrity or judgment, to remind him, that railing againſt the clergy of the eſtabliſhment has been that preparatory ſtep to ſubverſion, which has been twice adopted with ſucceſs by the ſubjects of Great-Britain. It may be unneceſſary to add, that the Revolution of the laſt century in this kingdom, and that lately effected in our colonies, are the inſtances which I have in view.

It is not poſitively ſaid, becauſe I would not haſtily pronounce ſentence againſt the good ſenſe of this nation; but he muſt be a very unprofitable ſpectator of what is going forward around him, who does not ſee reaſon to fear, that a conſpiracy againſt our eſtabliſhment is now in a ſtate of rapid growth in this country.

But ſurely theſe are eventful times, in which no wiſe man will be forward in hazarding experiments. Allowing that reformation is wanting, (a ſubject, upon which, alas! there can be but one opinion) it is ſtill a matter of *eſſential* conſideration, in what manner that

reformation is to be effected. The diſeaſe of which we complain, ſo far at leaſt as the clergy are concerned, is partial; ſuch as, we truſt, the vigour of a ſound conſtitution will prevent from becoming deſperate. But an ill-judged method of cure ofttimes brings death to a patient, not otherwiſe in danger.

If, upon the ground of the preſent ſuppoſed inſufficiency of the clergy, (a fact which their enemies know themſelves to be incapable of proving) communion with our church be no longer conſidered a matter of Chriſtian obligation; and it be judged adviſeable, for the more effectual advancement of the Chriſtian cauſe, to follow what may be deemed the ſound of the Goſpel, wherever heard, or by whomſoever delivered; we do not heſitate to ſay, that in ſuch caſe the remedy will, in the end, prove worſe than the diſeaſe; and that thoſe well-meaning perſons, who are perhaps moſt ſanguine in its application, will eventually find that they have been only inſtruments in the hands of deſigning men for the accompliſhment of purpoſes, which, could they foreſee them, they might be among the laſt to promote. "If the foundations be deſtroyed, what can the righteous do?" Pſalm xi. 3.

POSTSCRIPT *to the* CLERGY.

THE conſideration of writing to my Brethren the Clergy on a ſubject, with which every miniſter of the church is, from his profeſſion, ſuppoſed to be acquainted, has more than once ſtopped my pen. But circumſtances and ſituation may qualify one miniſter to ſpeak more fully upon ſome particular ſubject than another, without his laying claim to any general ſuperiority in profeſſional knowledge.

It having been the will of Divine Providence to fix my reſidence in a place, which has given me continued opportunities of lamenting the effects produced by a ſeparation from the communion of the Chriſtian church; it is to be expected, that my thoughts ſhould occaſionally have been employed upon this ſubject. Such of my brethren as are placed in ſimilar ſituations, may perhaps be obliged to me for bringing into one collected point of view the reſult of my reflections upon it.

And though the office aſſumed by me upon this occaſion, is not more honourable than that of the Gibeonites, who were but hewers of wood and drawers of water for the ſervice of the tabernacle; yet if, by collecting good and ſound materials, I ſhall prove the inſtrument of conveying uſeful information upon a ſubject, now as little underſtood as it is generally neglected, I ſhall hope that the merit of the deſign will be ſuffered to atone for the imperfection of its execution.

To thoſe who are advanced, and conſequently (it may be ſuppoſed) well informed in their profeſſion, theſe papers are not addreſſed; for to them nothing new can be ſaid upon this ſubject; nothing that perhaps might not be better ſaid by themſelves. But to thoſe of my brethren who are not in the ſame ſtate of advancement; who are unpoſſeſſed of the leiſure or advantages neceſſary to the proper ſtudy of their profeſſion, it may be a convenience to have information, which has been derived from various quarters, placed before them in ſome regular and connected form. Without wiſhing to foreſtall their judgment, I feel myſelf juſtified in ſaying upon this occaſion, that if I have been deceived in the ſubject before me, I have been deceived with what I conſidered to be

the beſt means of information in my hand, and the ſincereſt intention in my mind of promoting the Chriſtian cauſe. Should the ground upon which I have trodden upon this occaſion be deemed unſound, it appears to me, that there muſt be an end to all authority on ſubjects of this nature.

From the general tendency of the human mind to extremes, the blind credulity of one age often leads to unbounded ſcepticiſm in another. But the implicit faith of the monk, who, as the ſtory goes, when SATAN would have drawn him into hereſy, by aſking him what he believed upon a certain point, anſwered, "*Id credo quod credit eccleſia;*" and to the ſubjoined queſtion, "*Quod credit eccleſia,*" cautiouſly replied, "*Id quod ego credo;*" is not more contemptible than the profane licentiouſneſs of a PAINE, who would make his ſenſes the only ſtandard of his belief.

We do not diſclaim private judgment; much leſs do we admit the infallibility of the church. But if we have not diſcretion in theſe days to draw the line between an implicit obedience to authority, and an utter contempt of it, the experience of paſt ages ſeems to have been thrown away, and reaſon to have been given us for very little purpoſe.

"Call no man your father upon earth; for one is your Father who is in heaven. Neither be ye called maſters; for one is your Maſter, even CHRIST;"* a text that has not unfrequently been ſtrained beyond its original meaning. It was addreſſed by our SAVIOUR to his hearers, with the view of guarding them againſt the extravagant ſuperiority aſſumed by the rabbies over the diſciples, and the blind ſubmiſſion with which their doctrines were received. So far as it applies to a ſimilar ſubject, either to an aſſumed ſuperiority in the teacher, who would "exerciſe lordſhip over GOD's heritage," 1 Peter v. 3; or to the blind ſubmiſſion of the diſciple, who makes his faith in man, rather than in the Divine word, the ſtandard of his religious perſuaſion, ſo far it contains moſt wholeſome inſtruction to religioniſts of every age.

But when the idea, founded on this text, is carried to an extent to juſtify diſobedience to the authority of the church, upon what ground ſoever it may be maintained, ſuch a wild principle of conduct being totally inconſiſtent with the object of a regular ſociety, may be determined not to be within the meaning of a precept, delivered by the founder of that ſociety to thoſe who were to become the members of it.

* MATT. xxiii. 28.

The difficulty in this caſe has always been to eſtabliſh the exact line of conduct, which will ſecure that government, without which the church, as a ſociety, cannot ſubſiſt; and that liberty to the members of it, neceſſary to free them from all uſurped tyranny over their conſciences. Men, according to the different objects which they have had in view, and the ideas which they have formed upon the ſubject from the different lights in which it has been ſeen, have been continually drawing this line too much nearer to the one ſide or the other of that golden mean, in which reaſon, founded upon revelation, has placed it.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN, from the conſideration of the fallibility of ſynods, and the diſputes which too often prevailed in them, ſpoke of them with a contempt incompatible with the leaſt degree of reverence for their authority. Such writers as LE CLERC and SCALIGER will not fail to record his ſaying. "Si aurem præbeamus viris, quorum alioquin auctoritatem ſpernere nequaquam poſſumus, de ſynodis veteribus loquentibus, nobis magnifica oratione deſcribent ' αγιας και οικυμενικας συνοδους θεοφορων πατερων συναθροισθεισας επι της βασιλειας τε μεγαλε βασιλεως, και ισαποστολε'—ſanctos et œcumenicos cœtus adflatorum divinitus patrum, congre-

gatos in regno magni regis et Apoſtolis æquiparandi. Quis auditis his et ſimilibus verbis, religioſo quodam horrore et corpore et animo non contremiſcat, ac paratus non ſit oracula ejuſmodi cœtus avidis auribus excipere, haud aliter ac ſi cœlo ipſo emitterentur? Verum, hæc eſt, (quis crederet?) abſtracta notio ſynodorum, quæ in inconſpicua idearum republica coguntur; non imago earum, quæ inter miſeros mortales olim congregatæ fuere. Reges ignari, (non legent hæc Mohammedani, nec ethnici, ſed ii quorum ſcire intereſt, quo fiet ut verum aperte proloquar) reges, inquam, ignari, nec inter bonos principes numerandi, convocarunt. Græculos, qui linguæ acuendæ per totum vitam operam dederant, rerum ipſarum ignaros, contendendi ſtudioſos, perpetuis rixis inter ſe diviſos; et bardos aliquot homines ex Occidente, rudiores quidem illis, ſed non meliores; iique poſt pudendas contentiones, obſcuriſſima quæque dogmata, verbis ſæpe parum aptis, auctoritate ſuâ firmant; quæ ſtupidi populi ſine examine adorent, quaſi divinitus accepta. Non ficta me loqui norunt qui ſynodorum hiſtorias legerunt; nec certe vanus erat GREGORIUS NAZIANZENUS, qui dixit,

Ουδε τι πω συνοδοισιν ομοθρονος εσσομ' εγωγε
Χηνων η γερανων ακριτα μαρναμενων
Ενθ' ερις, ενθαμοθος τε, και αιχεα κρυπτα παροιθεν
Εις ενα δυσμενεων χωρον αγειρομενα.

"Nunquam ego ſedebo in ſynodis anſerum aut grum temere pugnantium. Illic contentio, illic rixa, et probra antra latentia fævorum hominum in unum locum collecta."—CLERICUS, Art. Crit. i. page 430.

The later corruptions of the church of Rome have furniſhed Proteſtant divines with a ſimilar theme for declamation. But the defence of either of theſe cauſes is not neceſſary to the ſupport of the ground upon which the preſent ſubject ſtands. The infallibility of councils and ſynods, and the infallibility of the church of Rome, may be ſuffered to fall together, without the proper authority of the church of CHRIST, for which alone we plead, being in the leaſt affected by the event. For if CHRIST did leave an authority with his church, (and if he did not, every idea of the church as a viſible ſociety muſt be laid aſide) every argument brought againſt that authority can apply only to the improper exertion of it. Thoſe authors, conſequently, who attempt to defend the Reformation upon principles inconſiſtent with the external conſtitution of a church, by *general*

and *unreſtrained* aſſertions in favour of private judgment, are in fact ſerving the cauſe againſt which they would be thought, perhaps, to be zealouſly engaged: for if by any mode of arguing, the governors of the church can be deprived of all authority over its members in ſpiritual matters, the conſtitution of the church is diſſolved: in this caſe, all ſects ſtand upon the ſame footing, and are juſtified in acting upon the ſame principle, of gathering as many of the diſperſed and ſcattered Chriſtians into their reſpective flocks as they can.

This endleſs diviſion among Chriſtians, ſo irreconcileable with the unity of the Chriſtian church, (a neceſſary conſequence of the admiſſion of thoſe principles, upon which the Reformation has been defended by ſome writers) has occaſionally proved ſuch a ſtumbling block to undiſcriminating perſons, that they have known no other way to get rid of it, than by returning to that ſtate of bondage, from which their forefathers were ſo happily delivered. And indeed no argument has tended more to confirm the enemies of the Reformation in their prejudices againſt it, than that which has been drawn from thoſe incautious poſitions, which, if purſued to their conſequences, utterly annihilate all order and government in the church.

In fact, the loose manner of writing, which has of late years prevailed, seems calculated not so much to give an idea of the plan upon which the church of CHRIST has been founded, as by a latitude of interpretation to accommodate the language of scripture to the various opinions that have been formed upon it; that the term of *church communion* may be rendered as *comprehensive* as possible, or mean nothing. A liberality, if so it may be called, which tends to dissolve all ecclesiastical government, and to leave us in possession of no determinate idea upon this important subject. For the unity of the church, upon which so much stress is laid in the sacred writings, is absolutely incompatible with that disjointed state, in which Christians (in consequence of mistaken ideas, and a certain indiscriminate application of terms, which originally conveyed a *distinct* and *appropriate* meaning) now think themselves at liberty to live. And it is a melancholy consideration, that the writings of some persons, who, from their office, were bound to understand the constitution of the Christian church, and to manifest a due zeal for its preservation, by loosening, as it were, what GOD designed to consolidate into a regular and well connected form, have thereby contributed to furnish

mankind with the moſt plauſible reaſons for their various deviations from it.

The produce of the ſeeds of liberty, ſown at the revolution, has, we are ſorry to ſay, in theſe days, aſſumed a wildneſs of growth, not to be reconciled with any regular mode of cultivation. Nor can we be ſurprized at the circumſtance, when we conſider the little influence which the Chriſtian religion now poſſeſſes on the public mind.

The natural man, it is well known, is indiſpoſed to reſtraint of every kind. The ſacred right of *independence*, as it is called in modern language, is the idol which he worſhips. Unfortunately for him, conſidered as a moral agent, there have been diſtinguiſhed characters in every age, whoſe talents have ſtamped a credit upon principles, which tend to favour his natural diſpoſition, by counteracting thoſe modifications of liberty neceſſary to its becoming an uſeful quality in ſociety. Forgetting, or not admitting, the actual condition of fallen man, they have proceeded upon the idea, that the chief danger to ſocial happineſs was to be apprehended from the ſide of government; and provided man was but left free enough, he was ſure to be what his Creator deſigned he ſhould be. Theſe diſtinguiſhed characters have, perhaps,

gained the title which they coveted, that of being eſteemed *liberal* men; but they have gained it for the moſt part at the expence of reaſon and revelation; and neither church nor ſtate owe them any acknowledgment for their ſervices. For he muſt be very little acquainted with human nature, and very unobſervant of the preſent progreſs of licentious opinions, who does not know, that the principles of independence now propagating in the world are abſolutely incompatible with all regular order and government.

It has been urged, in reference to the ſubject immediately before us, that in proportion as the human mind has advanced in knowledge by the progreſſive diſcoveries which have from time to time been made in the various branches of ſcience, it has become more qualified to eſtabliſh a rule of judgment for itſelf, independent of the authority of former ages. And ſo far as this poſition ought to apply, we may reaſon with LACTANTIUS in ſupport of it. "DEUS dedit pro virili portione ſapientiam—nec quia nos illi temporibus anteceſſerunt, ſapientiâ quoque anteceſſerunt, Quæ ſi omnibus æqualiter datur, occupari ab antecedentibus non poteſt. Sapientiam ſibi adimunt qui ſine ullo judicio inventa majorum probant, et aliis pecudum more ducuntur. Sed hoc eos fallit, quod ma-

jorum nomine poſito, non putant fieri poſſe ut aut illi plus ſapiant, quia minores vocantur, aut illi deſipuerint, quia majores nominantur."—LACT. Div. Inſt. ii. 7.

But whilſt the argument is thus ſtrong in favour of the freedom of human judgment, and againſt all implicit ſubmiſſion to authority, it is neceſſary to diſcriminate in its application.

Subjects of ſpeculation and experiment open to man a boundleſs field for enquiry and improvement, and were deſigned to exerciſe his faculties, and enlarge his underſtanding. Upon theſe ſubjects, he may be expected to *grow* in wiſdom, in conſequence of its being in his power to profit by the experience of thoſe who have gone before him. His knowledge, therefore, upon theſe ſubjects, becomes confirmed in proportion to its advancement.

But in matters of revelation and fact, the conviction of his underſtanding decreaſes in proportion as he is removed from the time in which that revelation and fact took place; and depends leſs upon the exertion of his rational powers, than upon the credibility of the teſtimony with which they are reſpectively accompanied. There is a reaſon, therefore, for deference to authority being paid in the one caſe, which does not exiſt in the other: and ſo long as that

deference is paid with judgment, the cauſe of truth and knowledge cannot fail to be advanced by it. For the idea of a *progreſſive* faith and *progreſſive* hiſtory is attended with equal abſurdity; becauſe no exertion of the mental powers can produce an alteration in either caſe. Revelation, being the *declared*, not the *imagined*, will of GOD, muſt, what miſrepreſentations ſoever it may be liable to, continue to be what it was at its original delivery; and facts which once actually took place, can never ceaſe to be facts, whatever attempts may be made to miſtate or ſuppreſs them.

The fact to which our attention is now directed, is the eſtabliſhment of the church by CHRIST, the founder of it. That ſuch a fact did take place, is generally admitted. Indeed, to diſallow it, would be to renounce all faith in hiſtory. The difference of opinion that has unfortunately prevailed with reſpect to the form of its government, it is not my preſent purpoſe to reconcile; for I am now addreſſing myſelf to thoſe who are ſuppoſed to entertain no difference of opinion on that ſubject. What is required of the clergy of the church, therefore, is, that their language and conduct ſhould correſpond with the judgment which they have formed. Perſuaded as they muſt, or at leaſt ought to be, that the

church, of which they are miniſters, is built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles; that its ordinances are of Divine appointment; and that, conſequently, it is that viſible ſociety to which Chriſtians ought to be gathered, for the purpoſe of carrying on the work of ſalvation; it cannot be a matter of indifference to them, whether communion with this church be preſerved, or not. Whatever thoſe who have unhappily ſeparated from it may think, or perſuade themſelves upon the ſubject, they who have undertaken a commiſſion in it can, it is preſumed, have but one opinion upon it; they muſt think with IGNATIUS, that "without the biſhop, it is neither lawful to baptize, nor to conſecrate the feaſt of love;" and that "*that* euchariſt only was in the primitive church accounted firm and good, which was conſecrated by the biſhop, or one whom he appointed."*

In the liturgy of the church we pray againſt *ſchiſm*. If, by their writing or conduct, the clergy at the ſame time give encouragement to it; will they not, in ſo doing, be thought to be acting in contradiction to the profeſſion which they have made? But this,

* IGNAT. Epiſt. ad Smyr. cap. 8. Εκεινη βεβαια ευχαριστια ηγεισθω, η υπο του επισκοπου ουσα, η ω αν αυτος επιτρεψη.—Ibid. Ουκ εξον εστιν χωρις του επισκοπου ουτε βαπτιζειν, ουτε αγαπην ποιειν.

it is to be feared, is the caſe with all thoſe, who, inſtead of pointing out to the laity the danger attendant upon their officiouſly meddling with the miniſterial office, and the duty of their ſubmitting to thoſe teachers, who by authority are ſet over them, by their looſe writing or irregular practice lead them to the very oppoſite concluſion. And what reaſonable hope can be entertained, that the unity of the church will be in any degree preſerved, whilſt thoſe whoſe office it is to preſerve it, become the inſtruments of its diſſolution.

"Much charitable allowance" (a learned biſhop of the preſent day has well obſerved) "is to be made for the errors of the laity, upon points, to which it is hardly to be expected they ſhould turn their attention of their own accord; and upon which, for ſome time paſt, they have been very imperfectly inſtructed. Diſſenters are to be judged with much candour, and with every poſſible allowance for the prejudices of education. But for thoſe who have been nurtured in the boſom of the church, and have gained admiſſion to the miniſtry, if, from a mean compliance with the humour of the age, or ambitious of the fame of liberality of ſentiment, (for under that ſpecious name a profane indifference is made to paſs

for an accompliſhment) they affect to join in the diſavowal of the authority which they ſhare, or are ſilent when the validity of their Divine commiſſion is called in queſtion; for any, I hope they are few, who hide this weakneſs of faith, this poverty of religious principle, under the attire of a gown and caſſock, they are, in my eſtimation, little better than infidels in maſquerade."*

It is not, indeed, to be wondered at, that the opinions of the modern clergy ſhould become leſs ſettled upon church matters than they have been; ſince the authority of a *Hooker*, a *Hickes*, and a *Lesley*, is by many conſidered to be in a manner ſuperſeded by that of an *Hoadley*, a *Warburton*, and a *Paley*. It is a very common thing for profeſſors of the law to be feed for the ſupport of what they know to be a wrong cauſe. Would charity allow us to ſuppoſe that miniſters of the church could ever act upon a ſimilar plan, it appears to me, that the three writers above-mentioned would have deſerved well of their ſuppoſed clients; for, were I a diſſenter from the church, I ſhould ſeek for no argument to juſtify my ſeparation, which might not be fairly drawn from their reſpective writings.

* Biſhop Horsley's Charge to his Clergy, p. 36.

Biſhop HOADLEY, whilſt he allowed that there was a Catholic viſible church, compoſed of particular viſible churches, which churches ought to be regular ſocieties, by his looſe and unqualified poſitions in favour of religious liberty, ſo undermined the foundation of all eccleſiaſtical authority, as to render null and void the conceſſion, which, from a different view of the ſubject, he found himſelf conſtrained to make.* Biſhop WARBURTON, in his Sermons before the Society of Lincoln's Inn, upon the authority of church government and church communion, appears to be throwing down his gauntlet, in the hope of calling forth ſome antagoniſt into the field, with the view of proving himſelf a more ſucceſsful champion in favour of religious liberty, than Biſhop HOADLEY had been before him. For the principles of theſe two writers, though perhaps ſomewhat differently expreſſed, tend to the eſtabliſhment of the ſame point.

WARBURTON acknowledges the church to be a ſociety; that "from the command of its Founder, obedience is due to it as ſuch; and that authority without obedience and ſubmiſſion is but a mockery."

* To enter at large into a ſubject which has been ſo fully treated by a celebrated writer, as to leave nothing to be ſaid upon it, would be to treſpaſs on the reader.—See LAW's Letters to the Biſhop of BANGOR.

At the ſame time he tells his readers, that this obedience and ſubmiſſion are to depend entirely upon the will and opinion of the party intended to be governed. Which is to ſay, that CHRIST made a law, which as ſuch is obligatory upon the conſcience; but which, according to this interpretation annexed to it, man is to obey or not, as he thinks proper. For (in the words of this learned writer) "all the juriſdiction which follows from the authority committed to the church of CHRIST, is this: that ſo long as any man continue a member of this ſociety, called the Church, he is to be obedient to ſuch laws of his ſpiritual governors, as concern diſcipline; but when he chooſes to withdraw himſelf from that ſociety, the rights of conſcience (as it is erroneouſly called) furniſh him with a juſtifiable exemption from his former obligation." So that conſcience, in ſuch caſe, not being governed by the *law laid down*, but by the judgment from time to time formed upon it, enjoining obedience or juſtifying diſobedience, according to the different diſpoſition of the judging party; it follows, that church communion, inſtead of being a matter of Chriſtian obligation, dwindles down into a matter of mere private opinion.

The above mode of ſtating this ſubject might have force in it, provided the church was a *human* ſociety, of which men were left at liberty to become members, or not. But as the church is a ſociety of CHRIST's forming, with the intent that all men ſhould be admitted into it, for the purpoſe of their being ſaved in it; and the government of it was eſtabliſhed by CHRIST, with a view to the effectual promotion of that gracious object; every exertion of human liberty, in this caſe, muſt be at the peril of the party exerting it; it being exerted in oppoſition to a poſitive eſtabliſhment, and in a matter in which it does not appear that GOD has left man at liberty to determine for himſelf. For if the eſtabliſhment of the church by CHRIST be *true*, the diſſenter from it is in an error; if his error be unavoidable, we rejoice to think that he is in the hands of a merciful GOD; but ſhould he deceive himſelf, ſhould his ſeparation from the church be derived from *evil cauſes*, be it remembered, that that wiſe Being who has eſtabliſhed nothing in vain, is not to be mocked.

But to render ſubmiſſion to eccleſiaſtical authority incompatible with the liberty of the rational Chriſtian, recourſe has generally been had to arguments drawn from the uſurped tyranny of the church of Rome;

which, though well calculated to produce effect upon the mind of the Proteſtant, do not apply to the ſubject; unleſs we conſider ſubmiſſion to an authority eſtabliſhed by Divine wiſdom, and to the corruption of it by human pride, to be the ſame thing. Widely different, however, as theſe caſes are, the Proteſtant is not taught to diſcriminate between them, when he is told (as he is by the author here alluded to) that the principle upon which the Reformation proceeded, was not ſo much a right of ſeparation from the errors of a corrupt church, as "that Chriſtian liberty which gives every man a right to worſhip GOD according to his conſcience." But ſurely this is making the exertion of what is called *Chriſtian liberty*, regarded *merely as ſuch*, rather than the cauſe in which it is exerted, the object of conſideration; upon which principle, ſeparation from a falſe church and ſeparation from a true one, become modes of conduct entitled to equal juſtification. Yet ſuch is the *Proteſtant ground*, upon which the Proteſtant church of England has been placed by ſome modern Divines, by whom proteſtantiſm is made to conſiſt in the right of ſeparating from a church, without regard to the cauſe. "When we left the Popiſh doctrines, (ſays Biſhop HOADLEY) was it becauſe they were *actually* corrupt? No; the

reaſon was, becauſe we thought them ſo." The ſame reaſon, therefore, founded in the private opinion of the party, juſtifies ſeparation from any other church, whatever its actual ſtate may be. "The principle of the Reformation (ſays Biſhop WARBURTON) was not ſo much a right of ſeparation from the errors of a corrupt church, as that Chriſtian liberty, which gives every man a right to worſhip GOD according to his conſcience;"* in other words, to ſeparate from a church when he thinks proper.

Biſhop JEWELL, however, who partook of the ſpirit of our reformers, thought very differently upon this ſubject. In his apology for the Church of England, he writes thus:

"The church of Rome (ſays he) accuſe us of hereſy, of ſeparation from the church and communion of CHRIST. It is true, we ſeparated, but not as heretics do from the church of CHRIST, but as all good men ought to do, from the corrupt ſociety of

* But ſuppoſing this conſcience, according to which a man worſhips GOD, to be an *erroneous* one; what then? Should my reader have duly attended to a foregoing chapter on Conſcience, he will, I flatter myſelf, have an anſwer ready for this queſtion; becauſe he will perceive, that the Biſhop, in this caſe, does not appear to make that neceſſary diſtinction between *conſcience rightly ſo called*, and *ſtrong opinion* or *perſuaſion*.

wicked and hypocritical perſons. Neither ſhould we have ſeparated at all, but upon the utmoſt neceſſity; and even then it was with all the unwillingneſs imaginable." The corruption of the church of Rome then was (in direct contradiction to what Biſhop HOADLEY ſays on this ſubject) the ground upon which our ſeparation from it was built; not that right of Chriſtian liberty, for which Biſhop WARBURTON is here pleading: a right which Biſhop JEWELL never admitted; as may be ſeen from his ſermon at ST. PAUL'S Croſs, in which he learnedly defends the church of England, and ſeverely condemns the Diſſenters for their *non-conformity* to it; which he could not conſiſtently have done, had he ſeen the Reformation in the light in which Biſhops HOADLEY and WARBURTON have here placed it.

In fact, this right, upon which the reformers did *not* act, becauſe it was a right which they did *not* acknowledge, takes the Reformation off from that firm ground of reaſon and ſcripture upon which it will ever ſtand ſecure; and places it upon that uncertain ground of precarious opinion, upon which the church, as a ſociety, can no where exiſt.

For if Chriſtian liberty give every man a right to worſhip GOD according to his conſcience, in

other words, according to his own *private opinion and perſuaſion*, (for conſcience, in the modern acceptation of the term, means nothing more) I would be glad to know what argument can be brought to promote the unity of the Chriſtian church, which this principle does not immediately ſet aſide; a principle which juſtifies the extravagancies of the wildeſt ſectary, and places religious perſuaſions of every kind upon the ſame dead level.

Biſhop WARBURTON's notions of the church communion, as it was to be expected, correſpond with his notions of church authority; and appear calculated rather to looſen and diſſolve that bond of union, by which the church of CHRIST was deſigned to be held together, than to anſwer any other purpoſe. They are founded upon the following diſtinction, which this celebrated writer has made between the Jewiſh and Chriſtian church. "The Goſpel (ſays he) was firſt addreſſed to the Jews as *a nation, a church, a ſociety*. But when the Gentiles had in their turn the Goſpel offered unto them, the addreſs was only to *particulars*. For though the terms of ſalvation reſpected the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, yet the Roman Senate, as ſuch, had no concern in them. And thoſe *particulars* who received the word, became,

not neceſſarily, from the ſimple nature and genius of the faith, *members of any community*, but of the *ſpiritual kingdom of* GOD."

Should the foregoing account of the diſtinction between Jew and Gentile have conveyed a ſatisfactory idea to the mind of the reader, it certainly has not to mine; for with a deſire to pay all due reſpect to the authority from whence it proceeds, I have been unable to diſcover the leaſt ground for it.

The Jewiſh Sanhedrim and Roman Senate, with reſpect to the terms of ſalvation under the Goſpel, appear to have ſtood preciſely upon the ſame footing: for; to the members of neither of theſe bodies, in their collective character, were thoſe terms addreſſed. In ST. PETER's firſt ſermon at Jeruſalem, his addreſs was not to the Jews as *a nation*, *a church*, or *a ſociety*; but to "the men of Iſrael, who had crucified the LORD CHRIST." And his anſwer to their queſtion, when, upon their being pricked in their hearts, they ſaid to PETER and the reſt of the Apoſtles, "Men and brethren, what ſhall we do?" was thus addreſſed to them as *individuals*—"Repent, and be baptized, *every one* of you, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt." Acts ii. 38. It was ordained,

indeed, that the Gospel should be first preached to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; upon the idea, it is probable, that from their education under the law, as a school-master to bring them to CHRIST, they ought to have been in a state of preparation to receive it. But this particular attention to the Jew, though it tended for some little time to confirm the Apostles in their prejudices, made no alteration in the nature of the commission which they had received. That was of the most general kind. They were "to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." MARK xvi. 15. When "the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile had been broken down by him, who had made both one," the church was open for the equal reception of all people. In the general execution therefore of the Apostlic commission, there was to be "no difference between Jew and Greek, between bond and free, between male and female; all were to be one in CHRIST JESUS; the same Lord over all, being rich unto all who call upon him." Rom. x. 12. Gal. iii. 28. Both Jew and Gentile, therefore, were admitted into the church of CHRIST upon the same plan; respect being had only to their profession of faith, as *individuals*, in a crucified Redeemer.

The diſtinction, then, here made between the Jew and Gentile, in their manner of receiving the Goſpel, appears to be not leſs imaginary, than the concluſion built upon it to be unfounded. For the ſpiritual kingdom of GOD has generally been underſtood, in ſcripture language, to be deſcriptive of the Church of CHRIST; or of *that community* of which the author muſt be ſuppoſed to be here ſpeaking.

This mode, therefore, of repreſenting Chriſtians, as members of *CHRIST's ſpiritual kingdom*, as it were in contradiſtinction to their being members of *any community*, is that kind of deſcription which every profeſſor will not fail to accomodate to his own particular caſe; but it is not to be reconciled with the account of the Chriſtian church in the ſacred writings; into which all who profeſſed the true faith were neceſſarily to be admitted. For from theſe writings it appears, that the *particulars* to whom the Goſpel was addreſſed, were, by virtue of their faith, admitted members of *a community*, or ſpiritual ſociety, diſtinguiſhed by the name of the *kingdom* or *church* of *CHRIST*.

It would be to treſpaſs upon the reader to enter upon a particular analyſis of this learned author's mode of arguing upon the ſubject before him; or

to point out the various contradictions that are to be met with in the pages alluded to. It may ſuffice to obſerve, that the argument upon which much is built, by all advocates for religious liberty, and which has its force when confined to the corruptions of the church of Rome, becomes weak and ineffectual in its general application to the church of CHRIST.

But an author, who, though highly diſtinguiſhed for his ſagacity and erudition, appears, from his writings, not to have formed a conſiſtent idea of the nature and conſtitution of the Chriſtian Church himſelf, cannot be expected to convey that idea to his readers. And in ſuch caſe, great abilities ſerve rather to confound and perplex the truth, by rendering it a ſubject of more complex inveſtigation, than to elucidate and confirm it.

What we lament in this caſe is, that biſhops, whoſe ſacred office it is to preſide over and govern the church of CHRIST committed to their charge, ſhould uſe a language calculated, if generally acted upon, to leave no church on earth for the exerciſe of the ſpiritual authority with which they have been entruſted.

There is ſtill a third writer of great reſpectability, whoſe opinions upon church ſubjects appear to differ

œconomy, conſidered as two branches of the ſame Chriſtian church; (Chriſtianity being only Judaiſm ſpiritualized) and the circumſtance of the Apoſtles, in the diſcharge of their office, acting under immediate inſpiration; are conſiderations which appear not to have had ſufficient weight allowed them in the Archdeacon's ſcale of judgment. Whilſt his reaſons why no permanent church government could be fixed upon, becauſe "no preciſe conſtitution could be framed, which would ſuit with the condition of Chriſtianity in its primitive ſtate, and with that which it was to aſſume, when it ſhould be advanced into a national religion; and becauſe a particular deſignation of office or authority amongſt the miniſters of the new religion might have ſo interfered with the arrangements of civil policy, as to have formed, in ſome countries, a conſiderable obſtacle to the progreſs and reception of the religion itſelf;" are reaſons which, it is preſumed, will not be generally admitted.

That a "religious eſtabliſhment is no part of Chriſtianity, but only the means of inculcating it," is a poſition that will be readily granted. But if a religious eſtabliſhment have been deemed neceſſary to the propagation of Chriſtianity, it will be concluded, that that form of it, which was ſet on foot by thoſe

inſpired perſons, to whom the charge of the church was firſt committed, is beſt calculated to anſwer the end in view. This is a fair preſumption, not to be ſet aſide but upon ſubſtantial evidence.

"The authority of a church eſtabliſhment is founded," we are told, "on its utility." The poſition, thus ſtated, appears capable of leading into error. The authority of the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian church is founded upon the character of the party who eſtabliſhed it; that party being JESUS CHRIST, through the miniſtry of his Apoſtles, its utility muſt of courſe be admitted. No ſuppoſed improvements, therefore, to be expected from human "deliberations concerning the form, propriety, or comparative excellency of different eſtabliſhments," can balance againſt the authority of thoſe perſons, who were favoured with that competent judgment upon this ſubject, which is now no longer poſſeſſed.

The Archdeacon's arguments upon this ſubject, if I underſtand them, may, when brought together, be thus ſtated: "A religious eſtabliſhment is no part of Chriſtianity. It cannot be proved, that any form of church government was ever laid down in the Chriſtian church. However this be, certain it is, no command was delivered by CHRIST on the ſubject.

But admitting that the form of government, by bishops and preſbyters, was eſtabliſhed by the Apoſtles, it muſt be conſidered only as a form adapted to the circumſtances of the church at that time, but not with a view to its being a permanent eſtabliſhment; becauſe no preciſe conſtitution could be framed, which would ſuit the church in its accommodation to the different arrangements of civil policy. The authority of a church eſtabliſhment is founded in its utility."[2] The concluſion to which the foregoing premiſes are deſigned to lead, ſeems to be this: That whenever it ſhall appear to the governing powers, that any new church eſtabliſhment, different from that in poſſeſſion, ſhall be more conducive to utility, as a ſcheme of religious inſtruction, than that ſet on foot by the Apoſtles; they are juſtified in adopting it.

But before this concluſion be admitted, we have a right to be ſatisfied with reſpect to the validity of the premiſes upon which it is built.

In anſwer to the poſition, "that it cannot be proved that any form of church government was laid down in the Chriſtian church, with a view of fixing a conſtitution for ſucceeding ages," ſome readers will ſay, that the contrary poſition has been *abundantly* proved. The authority of St. IGNATIUS and CLE-

MENT, to paſs over later writers, will, in the opinion of many, be deemed ſufficient to balance againſt it.

The certainty with reſpect to our SAVIOUR'S having delivered no command on this ſubject does by no means appear: this *certainty* ſtands only on the ground of the Archdeacon's naked aſſertion; to eſtabliſh which, it muſt be proved that every thing that paſſed between our SAVIOUR and his Apoſtles, relative to his church, has been recorded. This undoubtedly is not the caſe. The Apoſtle, for inſtance, directs his diſciples "to obey them that had the rule over them, and to ſubmit themſelves." The commiſſion then, which the Apoſtles received, inveſted them with an authority, to which Chriſtians were to be obedient. But there is no poſitive command of our SAVIOUR'S to be produced, upon which ſuch authority is built. To guard, therefore, againſt the idea of the Apoſtles aſſuming to themſelves an authority, which their commiſſion did not warrant; it muſt be ſuppoſed, that the evangelical narrative does not contain all the particulars relative to this ſubject. Now we read, Acts i. 3, of our SAVIOUR'S being ſeen alive of his Apoſtles, during the ſpace of forty days after his paſſion; and of his "*giving them commandments*, and *ſpeaking to them* of the things *pertaining to the kingdom of*

GOD." Is it not, then, moſt reaſonable to conclude, that ſome of theſe commandments, and part of the inſtruction vouchſafed to the Apoſtles at this time, reſpected the ſettlement and government of the Chriſtian church; and that although nothing deciſive on this ſubject has been left upon record, the conduct of the Apoſtles in the diſcharge of their high commiſſion was in a great meaſure regulated by the directions which they had received.

But, upon the ſuppoſition that the Apoſtles, in their eſtabliſhment of the church, were governed by the conſiderations pointed out by the author here alluded to; before we place the authority of the governors of the church at any ſubſequent period upon a level with that of the Apoſtles in a matter of this kind, it requires that we ſhould be ſatisfied that the advantages poſſeſſed by them are equal with thoſe heretofore poſſeſſed by the Apoſtles for the direction of their judgment on this ſubject.

The eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian church being only *temporary*, to be altered as the future circumſtances of ſociety, and the different arrangements of civil policy, might require, appears to be a poſition irreconcileable with the independence of the Chriſtian church, and calculated only to corrupt it. Before

it be therefore admitted, ſome ſtrong proof ſhould be brought that the eſtabliſhment of the church was deſigned to be of this *accommodating* nature. The language and conduct of the Apoſtles in the diſcharge of their office, together with the ſtate of the church for the firſt three hundred years of its exiſtence, authorize us to draw the contrary concluſion.

In fact, the connection of the church with the ſtate appears to be an accidental circumſtance, which may, or may not, exiſt; and which, conſequently, did not conſtitute a part of the plan upon which it was originally eſtabliſhed. The ſtate may come into the church, as in the days of CONSTANTINE; but the church is not to accommodate itſelf to the ſtate, to produce this effect: or the ſtate may be in oppoſition to the church, as in the days of the Apoſtles. Its eſtabliſhment therefore, as a *ſpiritual ſociety*, muſt reſpect its *permanent* condition, as it exiſts *in itſelf* upon the authority of its Divine Founder; not its *accidental* one, as it is occaſionally connected with civil policy. When kings and queens become the nurſing fathers and nurſing mothers to the church, the church is ſupported and benefited by their protection: when thoſe who ought to protect and ſupport it, deſert it or act in oppoſition to it, the church

is no longer in a flouriſhing condition with reſpect to temporalities; but its *eſtabliſhment* is in both caſes the ſame.

When Archdeacon PALEY, therefore, talks about "framing an eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, adapted to real life, and to the actual ſtate of actual religion in the country," he appears (if I underſtand him right) to be placing the ſubject in that *political* point of view, in which it was never deſigned to ſtand; and to be giving ſcope to that innovating ſpirit, which muſt be the conſequence of eſtabliſhing the Chriſtian church upon a *human*, rather than a *Divine*, foundation.

Before Dr. PALEY again commits himſelf on this important ſubject, he will do well to conſider what was ſo judiciouſly ſaid upon it a hundred years ago; "that in accommodating church government to the frame and occaſion of the ſtate, nothing be *diſeſtabliſhed* or *unſettled*, that ſeems to have been ſettled by the authority of ſcripture. Therefore, whereas we ſee there the government of the church firſt ſettled in the hands of biſhops, that is, paſtors that had authority over paſtors; (ſee epiſtles to TIMOTHY and TITUS) and we find no other form of church government, neither in the ſcripture, nor in the practice of the univerſal church, though the whole form and

frame of epiſcopal government is not *ſo expreſsly* preſcribed, but that the church may, in many things, have power of making therein accommodations to the times and exigencies of the ſtate; yet may not thoſe acts of accommodation amount to ſuch a height, as to ſubvert or aboliſh the government, which by the judgment of her members, *then infallible*, was ſet on foot; becauſe no judgment of *her preſent members now* can come in any competition with *her firſt*. And if any ſtate ſhall ſo accommodate itſelf, the accommodators may, perhaps, be found *fighting againſt the ſpirit of God*, manifeſted *both in the ſcripture, and in the judgment and practice of the univerſal church of God.*"*

A ſhorter and ſtill more direct anſwer to the Archdeacon's eccentric poſition, reſpecting the appointment of biſhops, conſidered only as a matter of temporary accommodation to the circumſtances of the primitive church, will be found in the following judicious obſervation of the celebrated Mr. LAW. "We do not ſay that epiſcopacy cannot be changed, merely becauſe we have Apoſtolical practice for it; but becauſe ſuch is the nature of the Chriſtian prieſt-

* "A Proteſtant's Account of his Orthodox Religion," p. 16, 17. Publiſhed in "Bibliotheca Scriptorum Eccleſiæ Anglicanæ;" by the Rev. GEO. HICKES, D.D.

hood, that it can only be continued in that method which GOD has appointed for its continuance. Epiſcopacy is the only inſtituted method of continuing the prieſthood; therefore epiſcopacy is unchangeable. The Apoſtolical practice, indeed, ſhews that epiſcopacy is the order that is appointed; but it is the nature of the prieſthood that aſſures us that it is unalterable. So that the queſtion is not fairly ſtated, when it is aſked, whether epiſcopacy, being an Apoſtolical practice, may be laid aſide? But it ſhould be aſked, whether an inſtituted particular method of continuing the prieſthood be not neceſſary to be continued? Whether an appointed order of receiving a commiſſion from GOD be not neceſſary to be obſerved, in order to receive a commiſſion from Him? If the caſe were thus ſtated, as it ought to be fairly ſtated, any one would ſoon perceive, that we can no more lay aſide epiſcopacy, and yet continue the Chriſtian prieſthood, than we can alter the terms of ſalvation, and yet be in covenant with GOD."* Till the Archdeacon has anſwered what has been ſo ably advanced upon this ſubject by the celebrated writer above-mentioned, the reader will readily diſpenſe with further enlargement upon it.'

* LAW's Second Letter to Biſhop HOADLEY.

That a writer, who ſees the Chriſtian church in the light in which Dr. PALEY appears to ſee it, rather as an appendage to the ſtate, than as a ſociety poſſeſſing an exiſtence and government independent of it, ſhould expreſs himſelf on the ſubject of creeds and confeſſions in the manner he has done, is but what was to be expected. He who conſiders the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian church as the mere reſult of human judgment, exerciſed on that particular ſubject at a certain given time, will conſider the eſtabliſhment of creeds and confeſſions, as expreſſive merely of the opinion or perſuaſion of the age in which they were compoſed; rather than as fixing any ſtandard of judgment for mankind at any future time.

To ſuch a perſon the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian church, and the eſtabliſhment of an article of Chriſtian faith, will appear ſubjects equally open to diſcuſſion; and ſubjects upon which no ſettled judgment can ever be formed; becauſe they muſt be continually varying with the opinions of mankind upon them. What was therefore an acknowledged article of faith in the primitive church, may in proceſs of time ceaſe to be ſo; becauſe (to make uſe of the Archdeacon's words) "in conſequence of the changes which are wont to take place in the judgment

of mankind, it may contradict the actual opinion of the church of the preſent day upon that ſubject."—The inference to be drawn from this poſition may be extended, I ſhould conceive, beyond the boundaries marked out to it in the author's mind. For, as an unqualified poſition, it authorizes us to conclude, that articles of faith, ſuppoſed to be built upon the revealed word of GOD, are matters of mere opinion; in other words, that articles of faith are true, juſt ſo long as men think them to be ſo, and no longer.

How this poſition is to be reconciled with the rule laid down by TERTULLIAN, and univerſally acted upon in the primitive church, we muſt leave Doctor PALEY to conſider. "Regula fidei *immobilis irreformabilis*; cætera diſciplinæ et converſationis admittunt novitatem correctionis."* And ſhould this fluctuating poſition be admitted, in what ſenſe, it may may be aſked, can the church be called, as it is by the Apoſtle, *the ground and pillar of the truth?* Inſtead of having any form of ſound words to have recourſe to for the determination of his judgment on any given point, the Chriſtian muſt, in this caſe, be continually aſking, *what is truth?* And if it be made to depend upon the fluctuating opinions of men, we

* TERTULLIAN, Lib. de Virgin. veland.

may venture to ſay, that it will not be worth his while to wait for the anſwer.*

By a perſon entertaining the foregoing idea reſpecting the accommodation of religious ſubjects to

* The accommodating articles of faith to the varying opinions of the members of the church for the time being appears to be ſo very inconſiſtent with the direction given by ST. PAUL to TIMOTHY for the diſcharge of his miniſtry, that that part of ST. PAUL's writings muſt, it may be ſuppoſed, have eſcaped the Archdeacon's obſervation. "Hold faſt," ſaid ST. PAUL to TIMOTHY, "*the form of ſound words*, which thou haſt heard of me, in faith and love, which is in JESUS CHRIST." 2 TIM. i. 13. "And the things which thou haſt heard of me among many witneſſes, the ſame commit thou to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo." 2 TIM. ii. 2. ST. PAUL (as we read Acts ix) was, by an immediate command from the head of the church, ſent to ANANAIAS and the diſciples at Damaſcus, for inſtruction in the Goſpel. The knowledge received by ST. PAUL on this ſubject, he afterwards communicated to TIMOTHY; whom, on that account, he called "*his own ſon in the faith*;" 1 TIM. i. 2; with direction that he ſhould commit the ſame to other faithful men, for the purpoſe of their teaching the ſame to others. Here then appears to be a form of ſound words handed down through five ſucceſſive ſtages, originating with CHRIST himſelf; a circumſtance, which warrants the concluſion that a certain ſtandard of doctrine was eſtabliſhed in the church for the uniform profeſſion of its members from time to time.

But, according to the Archdeacon's idea upon this ſubject, TIMOTHY ſhould have reminded ST. PAUL, that however determined he might be in his own mind to hold faſt *the form of ſound words*, which had been delivered to him; nevertheleſs that he could not take upon himſelf to anſwer for the conduct of thoſe who might ſucceed him in the miniſtry; becauſe, "by reaſon of the changes that are wont to take place in the opinions of mankind upon religious ſubjects," the form of doctrine which he had received might

the changeable opinions of mankind, it was to be expected that creeds and confeſſions ſhould be conſidered as attended with ſerious inconveniences. Eſtabliſhments of every kind are liable to the ſame objection; they will be inconvenient to thoſe who wiſh to be at liberty, and ſometimes ſo far forget the nature of man, and the condition of ſociety, as to be perſuaded, that they ought to be at liberty to eſtabliſh every thing for themſelves. But the queſtion is, whether this objection be not abundantly overbalanced by the convenience derived to mankind from their adoption. It may not be poſſible to guard againſt all the inconveniencies ariſing from eſtabliſhments, in which fallible men are concerned: there are however ſome, againſt which we would not wiſh to guard. The laws of the land, for inſtance, are inconvenient to thoſe who are indiſpoſed to obey them. So are creeds and confeſſions to thoſe who are diſinclined to believe them. Whilſt by others they are conſidered as reſtraints upon human liberty, neceſſary to the preſervation of peace, order, and truth, in the world.

not be ſuited to the future circumſtances of the church; the eſtabliſhment of it, therefore, muſt be left to depend upon the diſcretion and judgment of its miniſters for the time being. The anſwer which ST. PAUL would have returned upon ſuch an occaſion, the reader, it is preſumed, has already formed for himſelf.

The charge brought againſt the latter, that they check inquiry, and violate liberty, does not appear to be well founded. It certainly was not intended that creeds and confeſſions ſhould check *proper* inquiry: for every Chriſtian is called upon "to prove all things;" to make inquiry, that he may be able to give a reaſon for the faith that is in him; but "withal to hold faſt that which is good." Should doubt remain upon this ſubject, the language of the Homilies will clear it up; by which the opinions of our reformers may be clearly aſcertained. In the firſt of theſe homilies, which begins with a fruitful exhortation to the reading and knowledge of the holy ſcriptures, the members of the church of England are conjured to read and judge for themſelves. "Let us reverently," (ſay our reformers) "hear and read holy ſcripture, which is the food of the ſoul: let us diligently ſearch for the well of life in the books of the Old and New Teſtament; for in holy ſcripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to eſchew, what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at GOD'S hand at length. *In theſe books we ſhall find the Father from whom, the Son to whom, and the Holy Ghoſt in whom all things have their being, and keeping up; and theſe three per-*

ſons to be but one GOD *and one ſubſtance.* In theſe books we may learn to know ourſelves, how vile and miſerable we be; and alſo to know GOD, how good he is of himſelf, and how he maketh us and all creatures partakers of his goodneſs. We may learn alſo in theſe books to know GOD's will and pleaſure, as much as is convenient for us to know. And (as the great clerk and godly preacher, St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ſaith) "whatſoever is requeſted to the ſalvation of man, is fully contained in the ſcripture of GOD." Is ſuch language calculated to check inquiry? Does it require the members of the church to ſubſcribe to her doctrines without examination? Does it not rather enforce the very contrary mode of proceeding? The concluſion therefore is, that the articles of the church, though recommended to the Chriſtian profeſſor as ſummary deductions from the language of Holy Writ, were not deſigned by the compilers of them either to ſuperſede the uſe of the ſcriptures, or to abridge the right of private judgment ſo far as it might be exerciſed with advantage to the party. And he who, upon proper examination, cannot adopt the faith profeſſed in the church, is left, as he ought to be, to worſhip GOD in his own way.

As creeds and confeſſions, therefore, were not meant to check inquiry, ſo neither can they be ſaid to violate liberty; becauſe no man is under obligation to ſubſcribe to them. All that is required in this caſe being, that he who does ſubſcribe ſhall do it *ex animo*, as an honeſt man; plain language which admits of no ambiguity in the interpretation.

Should Dr. PALEY, therefore, have any ſerious objections to the creeds and confeſſions of the church of England, (which, from his manner of writing on the ſubject, ſome readers may be led to conclude) he has but to follow the ſteps of thoſe honeſt men who have ſeceded from the communion of the church, becauſe their conſciences would not ſuffer them to continue in poſſeſſion of preferments which muſt neceſſarily be accompanied with a *declared aſſent* to her doctrine.

But when we are told, that creeds and confeſſions "enſnare the conſciences of the clergy, by holding out temptation to prevarication;" it appears to us, that a reſpect for the body ſhould have withheld ſuch a ſuppoſition. For my own part, I can ſay, that I did not prevaricate on this ſubject. Charity bids me hope, that every one of my brethren can ſay the ſame.

But notwithſtanding the objections made to the eſtabliſhment of creeds and confeſſions, the Archdeacon does not abſolutely determine that they ought to be aboliſhed, but that they "ſhould be made as *ſimple* and *eaſy* as poſſible;" in other words, that by the general and comprehenſive form in which they are drawn up, they may poſſeſs as little of the nature of a teſt as poſſible. If, for inſtance, "promiſes of conformity to the rites, liturgy, and offices of the church, be ſufficient to prevent confuſion and diſorder in the celebration of Divine worſhip, then ſuch promiſes ought to be accepted, in the place of ſtricter ſubſcriptions."

By *ſtricter ſubſcriptions*, we are here to underſtand, it is preſumed, ſubſcriptions to our creeds and articles. But if theſe ſubſcriptions to the doctrines of the church prove ſometimes ineffectual to the ſecurity of the deſired object, can better hopes be entertained from mere promiſes of conformity to its rites, liturgy, and offices? Upon the ſuppoſition, that an honeſt man can, as a miniſter, make uſe of the liturgy of a church, whoſe creeds he does not believe; will conformity to the liturgy of a church anſwer every purpoſe of a belief of the doctrines contained in it? Surely not. "If articles of peace, as they are called,

that is, engagements not to preach certain doctrines, nor to revive certain controverſies, would exclude indecent altercations among the national clergy, as well as ſecure to the public teaching of religion as much of uniformity and quiet as is neceſſary to edification, then confeſſions of faith ought to be converted into articles of peace."

This mode of pleading in behalf of religious liberty does not appear calculated to do ſervice to the cauſe. To me the violation of religious liberty appears to be greater upon the plan here laid down, than upon the one adopted by the church in the caſe of its miniſters.

We will ſuppoſe that a miniſter who diſbelieved the divinity of our SAVIOUR, Dr. PRIESTLEY, for inſtance, ſhould, for the ſake of peace and order, conform to the rites, liturgy, and offices of the church; and upon his engagement not to preach *certain doctrines*, or to revive *certain controverſies*, ſhould be admitted into its ſacred miniſtry. Would not the engagement, by which Dr. PRIESTLEY, in the diſcharge of his miniſtry, is held bound, not to preach thoſe very doctrines, which in his conſcience he believes *to be true*, be a much greater violation of his Chriſtian liberty, than the excluding him from an

office by a teſt, to which he, as an honeſt man, cannot ſubſcribe? ST. PAUL, when he took leave of the church of Epheſus, told the elders of it, that he had kept back nothing that was profitable for them; "I take you to record (ſays he) this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of GOD." Acts xv. 26. Would not Dr. PRIESTLEY, with the example of ST. PAUL before him, when he felt himſelf ſhackled by the obligation under which the church had laid him, be apt to bring the authority of the Archdeacon againſt himſelf, by telling him in his own words, that "every ſpecies of intolerance which enjoins ſuppreſſion and ſilence, and every ſpecies of perſecution which enforces ſuch injunctions, is adverſe to the progreſs of truth;" and that conſequently ſuch an engagement as the one here propoſed ought not to be required?

But there is a conſideration which church governors muſt be ſuppoſed to have before them, in the eſtabliſhment of creeds and confeſſions, which muſt always give them a decided preference to the plan here propoſed; becauſe they promiſe to anſwer an effectual purpoſe; whilſt an engagement of a looſer nature might anſwer no purpoſe but a bad one.

But before reformation in any caſe is adopted, the conſiderate man wiſhes to be informed, with reſpect to the preciſe nature of the reformation propoſed; that he may be qualified to compare the preſent condition of things with what it may be under a new ſyſtem. Some inconveniencies in the eſtabliſhment of public ſocieties, like ſome diſtempers in the body, are borne with leſs danger than they are cured. Before the eſtabliſhment, therefore, of our preſent teſt is ſet aſide, he requires to be made acquainted with the conditions of the engagement propoſed to ſuperſede it; what particulars it reſpects; and what are thoſe *certain doctrines* upon which it enjoins ſilence; leſt the extreme of our profeſſion being burdened with more articles of faith, than may by ſome be deemed neceſſary to exiſting circumſtances, ſhould lead to an oppoſite but ſtill more dangerous extreme, by which the church may be left unpoſſeſſed of any *ſettled faith* at all.

In ſhort, the object of a teſt is to preſerve the unity of the faith among thoſe who are appointed to teach the Chriſtian religion; ſhould it not be made ſufficiently explicit to anſwer that purpoſe, the object in view is defeated, and the end of its eſtabliſhment rendered nugatory. In due ſubſerviency to this

conſideration, the poſition advanced, "that teſts and ſubſcriptions ſhould be made as ſimple and eaſy as poſſible," will be readily admitted.

But the reaſon given for relaxing the terms of ſubſcription, or for dropping any or all of the articles to be ſubſcribed, "that no preſent neceſſity requires the ſtrictneſs which is complained of, or that it ſhould be extended to ſo many points of doctrine," is a reaſon that will not perhaps be readily admitted. The propriety of fixing ſome ſtanding marks upon thoſe errors, by which Chriſtians in former days have made ſhipwreck of their faith, appears to be of a ſimilar kind with that of placing a light-houſe upon a dangerous rock, where ſhips have been heretofore caſt away. It is an old ſaying, that what has been may be again. Hereſies, like the faſhions of the world, have a kind of periodical revolution. A man who could ſit ſtill for a certain number of years, might in both caſes fancy himſelf living in the days of his forefathers.

No man ſhould, indeed, be charged with all the conſequences which may regularly follow from his notions; whilſt he neither draws them, nor perhaps perceives, nor owns them. But in the treatment of religious matters, it were much to be wiſhed, that

no opening ſhould be left, for conſequences to be drawn inimical to the Chriſtian cauſe; by giving a greater degree of latitude to human ſpeculations than is conſiſtent with the nature of the ſubjects upon which they are employed.

The Archdeacon's objection to teſts and ſubſcriptions is, that "they have been extended, multiplied, and continued, beyond what the occaſion juſtified." Should this have been the caſe, the remedy propoſed againſt the evil, that they ſhould have no permanent eſtabliſhment, but be adapted, from time to time, to the varying ſentiments and circumſtances of the church in which they are received, appears to be better ſuited to the members of the Roman Catholic, than to thoſe of the Proteſtant, perſuaſion; by making the opinions of men, rather than the revealed word of GOD, the ſtandard of Chriſtian faith. Upon this principle, the moſt notorious hereſy may at times become the eſtabliſhed faith; and the creed of a Pope PIUS ſtand upon the ſame ground of authority with that of the Apoſtles.

The foundation upon which this poſition is built muſt be ſuppoſed to be this; that the judgment of mankind upon religious ſubjects improves in proportion to their advancement in other branches of ſcience:

in conſequence, a modern eſtabliſhment of creeds and confeſſions ought, upon the ground of ſuperior perfection, to ſuperſede that of any former age.*

This, if I recollect right, is the idea upon which Dr. PRIESTLEY has proceeded in his diſcourſe upon the ſubject of free enquiry in religious matters. If my memory ſerve me well, (for I have not the diſcourſe at hand) the Doctor's words are theſe: "In nature we ſee no limits to our enquiries. One diſcovery always leads to many more, and brings us into a ſtill wider field of ſpeculation. Why, then," (continues the ſame writer) "ſhould not this be the caſe, in ſome degree, with reſpect to knowledge of a moral and religious kind?" The effect which this principle has in its operation produced in the mind of Dr. PRIESTLEY, according to his own account, has been, that, after having led him through ſeveral different

* The following anecdote, which has lately fallen in my way, is ſubjoined for the reader's application: At an ordination ſervice, which took place at a meeting of Diſſenters, it was obſerved by a miniſter who was expatiating on the modern improvements in religious knowledge, that the divines of the preſent day poſſeſſed great advantages; "for ſtanding, as they muſt be conſidered to do, upon the ſhoulders of the Apoſtles, they could therefore ſee further than they did." To which an old miniſter preſent, who did not ſee the ſubject in the ſame light, ſhrewdly replied, "that the modern divines, it muſt be allowed, not only ſaw further than the Apoſtles did, but alſo further, he believed, than ever GOD ſaw yet."

modes of faith, to a profeſſion deſtitute of all the eſſential doctrines of Chriſtianity, it has left him ſtill in a ſtate of uncertainty with reſpect to the "*ne plus ultra*" of his creed. And though this principle may not always be attended with the ſame fatal conſequences, yet if the ground upon which it is built be unſound, the principle itſelf ought not to be admitted.

When we conſider the various opinions which have prevailed, and which continue to prevail, upon the ſubject of religion, we feel ourſelves occaſionally at ſome loſs to reconcile them with that uniform conſiſtency, which is one of the moſt ſtriking characteriſtics of truth; no leſs than with the benevolent deſign which the DEITY muſt have had in view, in revealing that truth to the world. But when we take a view of man in his preſent ſtate of degeneracy, as a being perverſe in will, and corrupt in underſtanding; we ceaſe to be ſurpriſed at an effect neceſſarily reſulting from that variety of cauſes, to which the opinions and practices of men are at different times to be traced up. Pride, ſelf-opinion, intereſt, and paſſion, are the moſt prevailing principles of the human mind. A ſingleneſs of heart, accompanied with an uncorrupt love of truth for the truth's ſake, is a perfection to be coveted, rather than to be looked for, from that general de-

rangement of the human faculties which was brought about by the fall. When the ſame ſubject, therefore, is viewed through thoſe different mediums, which correſpond with the different characters and diſpoſitions of the parties concerned; it is not to be expected that an uniform concluſion ſhould be drawn from it.

But there is a medium, it is preſumed, between throwing an improper ſtumbling-block in the way of human enquiry, and that degree of licenſe which is deſtructive of all authority, by placing the improvement which is to be expected from human ſpeculations in religion, and other branches of knowledge, upon the ſame footing. The work of grace in the revelation of the Divine will, not being deſigned ſo much to exerciſe and improve the head as to correct and purify the heart, becomes on that account a ſubject for faith and practice, rather than ſpeculation. The diſcoveries in nature and art, though calculated to improve the condition of man in this world, as a rational and ſocial being, were nevertheleſs left to depend for their advancement upon the exertion of thoſe natural faculties with which GOD thought fit to furniſh him. But religion was a ſubject of too eſſential importance to be left upon ſuch an uncertain

footing. The advancement of it, therefore, became an object of immediate attention to the DEITY himself.

Religion, then, as coming from GOD, must be perfect; and can receive no improvement from the wit of man. We may talk of the progress of the arts and sciences; and in this sense the phrase is properly applied; but when we carry the same idea with us into religion, we are attempting to place subjects under the same point of view, which are as widely separated as earth from heaven. The characteristic doctrines of the Gospel have nothing to do with our improvements in any other science whatever; as they were originally revealed by GOD, the same they must continue; objects of *faith*, and of *knowledge*, to the end of time. "If studying the works be the method (says a learned divine) of knowing the workman, it is somewhat mysterious, that these last ages, which have so vastly improved natural philosophy, should have made no new discoveries in the Divine nature; which is neither more nor less than it was before; just so far as GOD revealed it, and no human mind can carry it further; yet we see every day fresh reasons to admire his wisdom and adore his power, but not to add to his nature or perfections."

Religion, it is certain, may be corrupted; for experience tells us it has been ſo in numberleſs inſtances; and as the beſt of things, it is perhaps the moſt liable to be ſo. In ſuch caſe it becomes neceſſary that it ſhould be reformed. But according to a well-known axiom, "to *innovate* is not to *reform*." The reformation of religion does not conſiſt, therefore, in *modernizing* its profeſſion, by an accommodation of it to prevailing opinions, but in reſtoring it to its primitive ſtandard; in conformity with the poſition laid down by one of the moſt ancient fathers of the church, "that what was firſt, that is true; whatſoever comes after, that is corrupt." It is therefore to lay anew the foundation; to go back to the beginning, (according to our SAVIOUR's expreſſion to the Phariſees) to return to the ways of our fathers; having that ſentence in view which was heretofore pronounced in the Council of Nice, "ηδη αρχαια κρατειτω." Upon this rational ground did the reformation of our church originally proceed. "Be it known to all the world," (ſays Biſhop HALL) "that our church is only *reformed* or *repaired*, not made *new*: there is not one ſtone of a new foundation laid by us; yea the old walls ſtand ſtill; only the overcaſting of thoſe ancient ſtones with the untem-

pered mortar of new inventions diſpleaſe thus. Set aſide the corruptions, and the church is the ſame." Upon this ſame ground muſt every reformation of the church continue to proceed: it muſt tend to ſome eſtabliſhed point, and be governed by ſome fixed ſtandard of judgment; otherwiſe a boundleſs field of ſpeculation being opened to the human mind, theory will follow upon theory in endleſs ſucceſſion; till man, with reſpect to his moſt important concern, will be left in the hopeleſs condition deſcribed by the Apoſtle, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

In a word, what upon the ground of Divine revelation was the faith of the church ſeventeen hundred years ago, muſt continue to be ſo ſtill. "GOD has revealed himſelf; and all that He has ſpoken, and conſequently all that is demanded of us to accede to, is declared in one book; from which nothing is to be retrenched, and to which nothing can be added. All that it contains, was as perſpicuous to thoſe who firſt peruſed it, as it can be to us now, or as it can be to our poſterity in the fiftieth generation." To talk, therefore, of adapting creeds and confeſſions to the varying ſentiments and circumſtances of the church for the time being, is to forget that the faſhion of the

world has nothing to do with a buſineſs of this kind. It is to forget that religion, as deriving its eſtabliſhment from that Being, with whom "is neither variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning," muſt be expected to wear the character of its Divine Author, that of being "the ſame *yeſterday*, *to-day*, and for *ever*."

The reader will, I truſt, excuſe my having thus dwelt upon a ſubject, which to me appears important. The maſter prejudice of this enlightened age is, that all opinions or modes of faith are *equally good*. That liberality of ſentiment, miſnamed charity, the offspring of ſpeculative religion, which affects to think well of men's ſafety in any religion, or even without any, has introduced a way of thinking upon religious matters unknown to the members of the Chriſtian church in its better days. The object at preſent ſeems to be, not ſo much to bring mankind up to the ſtandard of revealed religion, as to accommodate that ſtandard to the opinions of mankind; by inſiſting as little as may be upon thoſe doctrines which conſtitute the *eſſence* of Chriſtianity; and ſo *generalizing* our creed, that perſons of every perſuaſion may find no difficulty in ſubſcribing to it. This plan of extending the Chriſtian communion at the expence of the Chriſtian faith, may certainly anſwer the purpoſe

of enlarging our congregations; but in that caſe they will be congregations of unbelievers of different deſcriptions, rather than what they were deſigned to be. Had the Chriſtian religion been of this comprehenſive nature; or had the firſt preachers of it thought fit to have adopted eaſy and conciliating meaſures for the ſake of making converts to it, inſtead of being decided preachers of the faith *as it is in* CHRIST; the hiſtory of the church would have preſented us with a very different ſcene from what it now does; and the Apoſtles and martyrs might have died natural deaths.

The ground upon which I have proceeded in the ſubject before me (and I wiſh it to be tried fairly upon the authority on which it ſtands, and not haſtily condemned, becauſe it is old-faſhioned) is this; that there is an eſtabliſhment both for the government and doctrine of the church of CHRIST founded upon Divine revelation, and confirmed by Apoſtolic practice. Should this be admitted, that eſtabliſhment, ſo far as it can be aſcertained, conſtitutes a certain fixed ſtandard of judgment for mankind in religious matters. It cannot otherwiſe be what the name itſelf implies.

Archdeacon PALEY, if I underſtand him, has placed this ſubject before his readers in a different light; by making both the government and doctrine

of the church dependent upon the varying opinions of its members from time to time. The ſubſtance of what he has ſaid in his chapter on religious eſtabliſhments, when condenſed into one ſentence, being ſimply this; that there is no ſettled ſtandard of authority by which the judgment of mankind is to be regulated on this ſubject; but that, conſidering the church as a flux body, its opinions and practices muſt be accommodated to the fluctuating condition of its members.

It ſhall be left with the reader to judge which plan is moſt conformable to ſacred writ, and the deſign of the Chriſtian revelation; *that*, whoſe object it is to bring mankind together in the unity of the ſame profeſſion; or *that*, the perfection of which ſeems to conſiſt in reconciling differences of opinion on religious ſubjects with the ſame church communion,

The circumſtance of not one ſingle reference being made, in the Archdeacon's chapter upon religious eſtabliſhments, to the authority of any preceding writer upon that ſubject, will not, I truſt, operate ſo far upon the reader's mind, as to make him forget that there have been, among the primitive fathers of the church, ſuch writers as IGNATIUS, CLEMENT, and CYPRIAN; and among the divines of our own

church, ſuch learned men as ANDREWS, HOOKER, HAMMOND, HICKES, and LESLEY; from whoſe writings, as from a ſtorehouſe well furniſhed with information upon all matters of doctrine and government, as they exiſted in the primitive church, every ſcribe, who wiſhes to be inſtructed unto the kingdom of Heaven, would do well to draw.

Should it be urged, that appeal to human authority was forborne, upon the idea that the letter of ſcripture could furniſh the only concluſive evidence on ſubjects of this nature, the anſwer which CHARLES I. heretofore returned to H. NDERSON the Scotch preſbyter, may not be miſapplied: "Scripturam quidem ſe omni veneratione proſequi; at, cum ſcripturæ ſenſus ſit ipſum κρινομενον, et interpretandæ ſcripturæ aliqua demum methodus aut norma accommodanda ſit, ſibi quidem nullam hoc *primitivæ eccleſiæ* ſuffragio magis idoneam videri."

There is ſtill one remark, which preſents itſelf on the peruſal of moſt writers who appear diſſatisfied with our preſent eſtabliſhment; that when they would be underſtood to allude to the *teſt* required by our church, they adopt *general* poſitions, and *ambiguous* expreſſions, without particularizing thoſe objection-

ionable points, to which it is at the ſame time their object to direct the attention of their reader.

Biſhop HOADLEY, in alluſion to the foregoing ſubject, wrote thus: "Thoſe things which are not plain, are not neceſſary; thoſe things we cannot comprehend, are no further neceſſary than is revealed. And when men go about to explain, and make them clear to the world, they go about a work they need not. But when they thruſt into the faith their *vain philoſophy*, and impoſe their *ſcholaſtic niceties* for neceſſary religion, they do more than they can juſtify. How far ſome councils have been guilty of this, carried more with a zealous hatred to a man or a party, than a love to neceſſary truth; let them that think it concerns them ſee." The late Biſhop WARBURTON on the ſame ſubject expreſſed himſelf ſtill more particularly. "Some men," ſaid he, "who held the truth, that it is by *faith alone* we are juſtified, thought they could never have enough. Inſtead therefore of ſtopping at the few general and fundamental principles of Chriſtian faith, clearly diſcovered and *uniformly believed** by all, they went on, and brought into the

* To prevent the reader from being at any loſs for the Biſhop's meaning in this caſe, thoſe "fundamental principles of the Chriſtian faith, which are uniformly believed by all," ſhould have been

church, as terms of communion, abſtruſe queſtions relating to points obſcurely delivered; and made ſtill more doubtful by having the principles of the Greek philoſophy, to which the ſacred writers paid no regard, and with which the faith had no concern, applied to their ſolution." "The violation of the unity of the ſpirit having been occaſioned by theſe miſtakes, we may eaſily collect, that the means of preſerving it entire had been the requiring no more, as the terms of church communion, than what CHRIST hath delivered to be explicitly believed; and theſe not conſiſting of many particulats, and all of them *clear* and *ſimple*," &c.

The remedy propoſed by this writer for reſtoring that unity, which has thus been unhappily violated, was, that all *unneceſſary articles* ſhould be retrenched, to which the animoſity of parties, the ſuperſtition of barbarous ages,* and even the negligence of time,

pointed out. The Biſhop might not perhaps have wiſhed to be interrupted by an inquiry of the kind.

* "It is foreign to the purpoſe," ſaid the learned Dr. BALGUY, in one of his charges, "when we are ſpeaking of eſtabliſhments in general, to ſuggeſt that our preſent Articles *impoſe* upon us *the doctrines of dark and ignorant ages*. Otherwiſe indeed one might be tempted to aſk the objectors, of *what* ages they ſpeak. I hope they do *not* ſpeak of the times of the Reformation. The age of RIDLEY, and JEWELL, and HOOKER, will be reverenced by the lateſt poſterity."

had given an imaginary importance; and that the formula of faith ſhould be reduced to its primitive ſimplicity, leaving all diſputable points to the free deciſion of every man's private judgment.

Archdeacon PALEY's opinion upon this ſubject appears to correſpond ſtrictly with that of the preceding writer. The remedy propoſed by him againſt the complicated evil occaſioned by the unneceſſary extenſion and multiplication of teſts is, "that they ſhould be made as *ſimple* and *eaſy* as poſſible; and upon the ſuppoſition that a promiſe of conformity to the liturgy, or an engagement not to preach *certain doctrines*, might ſecure to the public teaching of religion as much of uniformity and quiet as is neceſſary to edification, that then ſuch promiſe or engagement ſhould ſuperſede the uſe of *ſtricter* ſubſcriptions."

One great object with every writer is to convey a diſtinct meaning to his reader. When this is not done, it muſt proceed either from defect of ability in the party, or ſome other cauſe. Where no defect of ability can be ſuppoſed to exiſt, it becomes a queſtion which ought to be reſolved, why, in a ſubject of importance, which reſpects the articles of the Chriſtian faith, *ambiguous* language ſhould be made uſe of; which at the ſame time that it may mean any

thing, yet ſpeaks ſo indeterminately, as to leave the reader in doubt with reſpect to the preciſe meaning of the writer.

It may be aſked, why we are not plainly told in this caſe, what is that *vain philoſophy*, and what are thoſe *ſcholaſtic niceties*, which the church impoſes upon her miniſters for neceſſary religion?—What are thoſe "*abſtruſe queſtions* to which the ſacred writers paid no regard, and with which the faith hath no concern?" What are thoſe *unneceſſary* articles which ſhould be retrenched; and thoſe *controverted doctrines* upon which it is propoſed that ſilence ſhould be enjoined? By a plain anſwer to theſe queſtions we ſhould be qualified to judge to what articles of the church objection was meant to be made; and in what claſs of profeſſors the objectors were to be placed.

Deſirous of avoiding cenſorious judgment, I feel unwilling to draw any concluſion from the paſſages above noticed; or to allow a conjecture with reſpect to the particular profeſſional tenets of the authors here alluded to, to engage my mind; becauſe charity conſtrains me to think, that thoſe who have ſubſcribed to the articles of a church muſt believe them. The only conſideration ſuggeſted to the reader on this oc-

caſion is, that the beſt of men are liable to error; and that writers moſt diſtinguiſhed for their talents will not always be found the ſafeſt guides in purſuits of religious knowledge.

A full conviction, at the ſame time, with reſpect to the nature, deſign, and conſtitution of the Chriſtian church, calls upon me, as an honeſt man, what tribute ſoever I may feel diſpoſed to pay to the abilities of the writer, from whom I am bound to differ, ſincerely to lament, that in theſe times eſpecially, when, if we may ſo expreſs ourſelves, the diſſolution of eſtabliſhments ſeems to have become the order of the day, a propagator of ſuch ideas as are to be met with in the writings of Archdeacon PALEY, ſhould be placed, as I underſtand he is, in the oracular chair of a learned univerſity.

But how ambiguous ſoever the language of ſome of our clergy occaſionally has been, we muſt hope, till we have conviction to the contrary, that their principles were ſound. For to form a concluſive judgment of any man from a ſpeech haſtily delivered, or a ſentence unguardedly written, would be not to deal with another as we would wiſh to be dealt by. It muſt be taken for granted, therefore, that every miniſter of the church, in conſequence of his engage-

ment, poſſeſſes ſome decided judgment in favour of the doctrine and government eſtabliſhed in it. By him therefore it cannot be conſidered to be a matter of indifference, whether men believe that doctrine, or ſubmit to that government, or not.

If he believe himſelf to be in the truth, he muſt of courſe think thoſe who differ from him in opinion to be in error. And whilſt he makes all due allowlowance for thoſe who differ from him; (and large allowances will be made, when, to borrow an idea from Lord BACON, it is conſidered, that the human mind takes ſuch *plies* from education, and a thouſand other cauſes, that even wiſe and good men rarely think exactly alike upon any ſpeculative ſubject whatever;) he will nevertheleſs conclude, if he be conſiſtent with his profeſſion, that where there is a ſtandard for the regulation of human judgment on Divine ſubjects, two oppoſite opinions upon them cannot be true.

There is indeed, we are ſorry to think, a wild ſectarian ſpirit growing up in this country, which, if not properly counteracted, will work to the utter ſubverſion of its conſtitution. For (as it has been excellently obſerved by a late writer, whoſe opinion I am proud to think perfectly correſponds with my own on this ſubject) "ſects in religion and parties

in the ſtate originate in general from ſimilar principles. A ſect is, in fact, a revolt againſt the authority of the church, juſt as a faction is againſt the authority of the ſtate; or, in other words, a ſect is a faction in the church, as a faction is a ſect in the ſtate: and the ſpirit which refuſes obedience to the one, is equally ready to reſiſt the other."* A poſition which will not be controverted, but by thoſe who feel themſelves indiſpoſed to admit the regular eſtabliſhment of authority in either caſe.

But upon this head, it is to be feared, it may be ſaid, "Iliacos intra muros peccatur." What from the looſe writing of ſome of the clergy, and the general ſilence of the body, upon the conſtitution of the Chriſtian church, the ſubject is ſo grown out of knowledge, as to have loſt almoſt univerſally its influence upon the mind. Aſk an ignorant man, why he ſeparates from the church, his anſwer probably will be, that he lives in a land of liberty, where he has *a right* to worſhip GOD in the way he thinks proper. Aſk a man of reading and underſtanding, and he will quote reſpectable authority for the ſame opinion: whereas both one and the other might, it is probable, have continued members of the church,

* BOUCHER on the American Revolution. Diſcourſe II.

had they been taught to form a correct notion of it. But when they have been led to conſider the *church* as a word of general and indiſcriminate application, and religion itſelf as a ſubject of mere private opinion, independent of all authority; it is not to be expected that they ſhould feel diſpoſed to reſtrain a licence, of which, from the latitudinarian way of thinking and acting, in which they have been educated, they conceive themſelves born in rightful poſſeſſion.

The miniſter of the church however, who prays conſtantly againſt *ſchiſm*, ſhould in conſequence think it is duty to prevent Chriſtians, as far as may be, from falling into ſo dangerous a ſin. And whilſt he remembers of what ſpirit a Chriſtian ought to be, the means made uſe of by him for the purpoſe wil be no other than what a Chriſtian ought to employ. "Following," (to make uſe of the words of the celebrated Mr. LOCKE) "the example of the *PRINCE of Peace;* who ſent out his ſoldiers to the ſubduing of nations, and gathering them into his church, not armed with the ſword, or other inſtruments of force, but accoutred in that beſt armour, the *Goſpel of peace*, and the *exemplary* holineſs of Chriſtian converſation."

Without pronouncing ſentence therefore upon, or diſturbing, thoſe who are without the church, his

object will be to preſerve thoſe that ſtill remain in it. This he will do, by enabling them to form correct notions of the nature and conſtitution of the Chriſtian church; and by giving them ſuch an explanation from time to time of its ſervices, as may produce in them a rational attachment to its communion. Conſidering the church as a ſociety, which has GOD for its founder, and Chriſtian faith as the offſpring of Divine revelation, he will regard the varying opinions of mankind upon thoſe ſubjects, rather as proofs of the weakneſs and incapacity of the human mind, than as illuſtrations of the truth. At the ſame time, therefore, that he is deſirous of laying no unneceſſary reſtraint upon human judgment in religious ſubjects; he will take care to point out the ſtandard by which it ſhould be regulated; a ſtandard which draws the line between faith and credulity; between a ſober inquiry after truth, accompanied with a proper reſpect for authority, and that licentiouſneſs of opinion which knows no authority but its own; in a word, between that liberty with which CHRIST has made us free, and the liberty which the natural man is at all times diſpoſed to make for himſelf.

But the clergy, ſome individuals of the body at leaſt, have ſtill more to anſwer for on this ſubject.

A freedom of opinion on church matters has led, as it might be expected, to a freedom of practice. Whilſt ſome by their writings have put the eſtabliſhment of the church, as it were, quite out of ſight; others by their conduct have openly withdrawn Chriſtians from it, by becoming, in ſome caſes, officiating miniſters in the places of public worſhip independent of epiſcopal jurisdiction; in others, by their attendance at places of worſhip which are in an actual ſtate of ſeparation from the eſtabliſhed church of their country. How ſuch conduct is conſiſtent with the eſtabliſhed government of the church; how the circumſtance of a miniſter of the church taking upon himſelf to preach in a place of worſhip unlicenſed by the biſhop, is to be reconciled with canonical obligation;* with what propriety ſuch a miniſter can, in the liturgy of the church, pray againſt *ſchiſm* in the place where he is in the actual commiſſion of the ſin; are points upon which I feel myſelf

* If the oath of *canonical obedience* mean any thing, it means obedience to the biſhop according to the canons of the church. Taking it in this light, I do not ſee how thoſe of the clergy, who renounce epiſcopal juriſdiction, by officiating in, or attending in direct defiance of the canons, at places of worſhip ſeparated from the eſtabliſhment, can be ſecure from the charge of at leaſt *virtual perjury.*

at a loſs to determine. For, as I have always underſtood, the ſchiſm of which ſuch a miniſter is guilty, ſtrictly correſponds with that ſin, againſt which the Apoſtles and firſt biſhops ſo loudly inveighed, which conſiſted in breaking the unity of the church by a ſeparation of particular congregations from the authority of their reſpective biſhops.* But excluſive of this important conſideration, there is, moreover (as the ſubject ſtrikes me) ſomething like two fallacies practiſed upon this occaſion. The proprietors of theſe ſeparate places of worſhip, by ſheltering them under the Toleration Act, proſtitute an act of the legiſlature to a purpoſe for which it was never made. By ſo doing, what was deſigned only as an indulgence to thoſe who diſſented from the church, becomes miniſ-

* ST. CYPRIAN conſidered that the unity of the Chriſtian church was liable to be broken two ways; by *hereſy* and *ſchiſm*. "DIABOLUS hæreſes invenit et *ſchiſmata;* quibus ſcinderet unitatem." CYPR. de Unit. Eccl. § 2. In alluſion therefore to this diſtinction, after having, with an eye to the profeſſion of the ſame faith, exemplified the unity of the church in the words of ST. PAUL; "unum corpus, et unus ſpiritus, una ſpes vocationis veſtræ, unus DOMINUS, una fides, unum baptiſma, unus DEUS;" he proceeds to point out that other bond of unity, by which it was deſigned that the Chriſtian church ſhould be held together. "Nemo fraternitatem mendacio fallat; nemo fidei veritatem perfidâ prævaricatione corrumpat; *epiſcopatus eſt unus;* cujus a ſingulis in ſolidum pars tenetur."—CYPR. de Unit. Eccl. § 4.

terial to the actual diviſion of the church itſelf. This is a fallacy practiſed upon the legiſlature.*

But there is ſtill another fallacy attached to theſe ſeparate places of worſhip, which, though it may not be deſigned, ought to be guarded againſt. The adoption of the liturgy of the church of England ſerves as a decoy to many well-meaning Chriſtians; who, from their perfect ignorance with reſpect to the nature of the Chriſtian church, and the ſin of ſchiſm, conclude, that if they attend the church ſervice, it matters not *where* it is performed, or by *whom*; and thus become *ſchiſmatics*, without knowing that they are ſo.

It may be a poſition inadmiſſible in the preſent day, though founded upon the baſis of truth and

* By the Act of Toleration, thoſe who declare themſelves *diſſenters from the church of England* are exempted from certain penalties, on their taking certain oaths. But in the places of worſhip here alluded to, ſuch as Lady HUNTINGDON's chapel in Bath, as it is called, and others of a ſimilar kind, the parties aſſembled are not diſſenters from the church of England; for they make uſe of its ſervices, and have at times a clergyman of the church of England for their officiating miniſter; they are therefore a ſort of ſeparatiſts from the church, at the ſame time that they conform to it: a fallacy which, it might be hoped, no clergyman of the church of England would countenance, becauſe it tends to defeat an object which he, as a miniſter of the eſtabliſhment, ought to have at heart.

propriety, that no clergyman of the church ought to appear, much leſs to officiate, in any place of public worſhip, ſeparated from that eſtabliſhment of which he profeſſes himſelf a miniſter. The ſpirit of the canons is certainly expreſs to this purpoſe. Seeing this ſubject, therefore, in the light in which I have been taught to ſee it, I beg leave to ſuggeſt it to the conſideration of my brethren, whether there is not a great inconſiſtency in their appearing under the character of Proteſtant Diſſenters on one Sunday, and under that of miniſters of the eſtabliſhed church on the next: and whether, putting all other conſiderations out of the queſtion, the ſingle one of not giving offence ought not to operate with them ſo far as to prevent their adopting a practice, which renders their miniſtry leſs welcome to many ſerious members of the church; at the ſame time that it tends to bring the eſtabliſhment into that contempt in the minds of the common people, which may prove the prelude to its deſtruction.

It is not conſiſtent with charity to make the actions of men the deciſive interpreters of their principles; becauſe the motives by which men are impelled, are perfectly known only to that Being to whom judgment belongeth. Whether, therefore, there may or

may not be a portion of the old *Corinthian leaven* mixed up with this zeal for promoting GOD's honour in an *irregular* way is a point upon which I venture not to pronounce; my object being only to conſider the evil conſequences derivable to the eſtabliſhment from the eccentric practice of its clergy; which will be the ſame, let the motives by which they have been directed be what they may.

Upon this head it will be ſufficient to obſerve, that if the preſent ſchiſmatical practice, adopted by ſome clergy, of ſeparating congregations from their biſhops, continue to prevail; and nothing more is deemed neceſſary to the eſtabliſhment of a congregation upon a church-plan in any place, than money to erect a building, and popular talents to fill the ſeats; the office both of biſhops and patrons is in a fair way to become uſeleſs. And thus the building a place for public worſhip, which in better times was conſidered a pious undertaking, having the promotion of GOD's honour for its chief object, degenerates into a buſineſs of mercenary ſpeculation, and like other buildings for public reſort, is eſtimated by the probable *quantum of intereſt* which it will produce to the proprietor. This is one of the ſigns of the times, and affords a ſtrong proof of our living in the latter days; when the love

of many is waxed cold, and when faith is a thing rare to be found in the world.

But the evil will not ſtop here; for irregularity of any kind, like a bowl rolling down a declivity, ſeldom ſtops till it is arrived at the *ne plus ultra* of its courſe.

If the clergy of the church act thus independently of the biſhop, and in breach of the eſtabliſhment, it is not to be expected that laymen will feel themſelves under greater reſtraint. Buildings will therefore be erected, and the church ſervice performed, by perſons not in epiſcopal orders.* For in ſuch caſe, who is to draw the line between the irregularity of an authorized miniſter, and the licence of a preſumptuous layman? If the epiſcopal authority be openly diſregarded by thoſe whoſe duty it is to reverence and ſupport it, we muſt not be ſurpriſed, ſhould GOD in judgment ſuffer an eſtabliſhment to be totally diſſolved, of the excellency of which its members ſeem, by their conduct, to be grown inſenſible.

It is to be feared, indeed, that the cuſtom which has long ſince been adopted, even under epiſcopal authority, of erecting chapels at the expence of individuals for the performance of religious worſhip, has in ſome degree led to this total ſeparation from it.

* A place of worſhip of this ſort there is now open in Bath.

For by withdrawing the pariſhioner from the charge of his appointed miniſter, it has introduced a way of thinking more ſuited to the frequenters of conventicles, than to the members of the eſtabliſhed church; by which the office of the *pariſh prieſt* is in a manner ſuperſeded by that of the *preacher*.

Conſidering, therefore, that we live in an age, in which many, who neither know the ſcripture, nor the nature of CHRIST'S church, think they can make their own religion, their own church, and their own miniſters, it is not to be wondered at, that it ſhould by degrees become a matter of indifference with Chriſtians *where* they are aſſembled, provided they like their teacher. But this plan of erecting chapels for the emolument of individuals not only introduces among us extra-parochial aſſemblies of an anomalous kind, deſtructive of the connection which ought to ſubſiſt between miniſter and people; but being incompatible with that principle of unity upon which the church of CHRIST is founded, and ſubverſive of that order and diſcipline by which it ought to be maintained, tends to undermine the eſtabliſhment itſelf. We are told by a celebrated writer* of the preſent day, that ſhould the diſſenters from the eſta-

* Archdeacon PALEY.

bliſhment become a *majority* of the people, the eſtabliſhment itſelf ought to be altered. This muſt be allowed to be a very ſummary, though to many it will appear to be neither a very ſatisfactory nor very practicable way of ſettling a moſt important concern. How far an old proverb, though not conſtrued literally, ought to weigh in this caſe, thinking men will be apt to conſider.

"Eſt turba ſemper argumentum *peſſimi.*"

Indeed this ſtrange and novel idea of putting the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian religion, as it were, to the vote, by making it dependent on the voice of the majority; thus bowing the knee to popular opinion, rather than to the GOD of our fathers; (in conformity with which the proteſtant government of this country may be called upon to deſert the cauſe of proteſtantiſm, and become the eſtabliſher* of Roniſh error and ſuperſtition;) is an idea, which as it was not to be expected from a miniſter of the church, muſt, it is to be concluded, not have been conſidered by the Archdeacon in all its bearings.

* In Ireland, upon a moderate calculation, there are four Roman Catholics to one Proteſtant. In conformity therefore with the idea here advanced by the Archdeacon, the Roman Catholic ought to be the eſtabliſhed religion in Ireland. To detail the operation of ſuch an unlimited principle, would be an inſult to the reader.

That ſuch ſhould be the ground upon which Dr. PRIESTLEY places this ſubject, can be no matter of ſurpriſe to us, when we conſider that ſuch is the ground upon which he builds his projected reformation of our church. In the character of a decided ſectariſt, a bold and open enemy to our eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, he tells us plainly, that means are preparing for its deſtruction; and that the final accompliſhment of the undertaking waits only for the time, when the *majority* of the people ſhall be ſeparated from it.

Now though I do not think Dr. PRIESTLEY's religious tenets calculated to gain him many converts among the people, and conſequently no ſerious apprehenſions are to be entertained on that ſcore; it may not, however, be amiſs to draw a leſſon of prudence from the Doctor's information on this occaſion. "Fas eſt et ab hoſte doceri."

Certain it is, that ſeparation from the eſtabliſhed church of this country has of late years abundantly increaſed; and it is equally certain, that in proportion as this is the caſe, the eſtabliſhment itſelf is weakened. For whatever be the different opinions of different ſects, and what enmity ſoever they may bear towards each other on that account, the deſtruction of the eſtabliſhment is a point upon which they are

at all times ready to join hand in hand. Now, if to this conſideration we add the circumſtance of that diviſion, which is growing up as it were within the church, by which the parochial connection between miniſter and people is deſtroyed; in conſequence of which, all ideas about a church eſtabliſhment are every day growing more and more out of ſight; we muſt not be ſurpriſed, if an evil, which every thinking well-wiſher to his country deprecates, ſhould advance upon us with more haſty ſteps than we may at preſent be willing to believe. This appears to be an object that well deſerves the attention of thoſe whoſe office it is to watch, "ne quid detrimenti reſpublica capiat."

Should our governors think as they ought upon this ſubject, that our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment has in the preſent, as in every former day of trial, proved the firmeſt ſupport to the government of this country, they will of courſe conclude that it is worth preſerving. To ſpeak with an immediate reference to thoſe mad doctrines, the unhingers of all regular ſociety, which have of late been circulated with ſuch pernicious induſtry, the clergy of the eſtabliſhment may ſay with OTHELLO, that they have "done the ſtate ſome ſervice." Indeed, to conſtitutional government at all

times they have felt it their duty to promote the firmeſt attachment. It will therefore be but a prudent exertion of political wiſdom, to provide all means, conſiſtent with ſound judgment, for the more general extenſion of the benefits of an eſtabliſhment, to which the government of this country confeſſedly ſtands indebted, with the view of counteracting as much as may be the preſent plan of limiting and contracting them.

The moſt deciſive experiment having been made, that the principles of non-conformity ultimately produce faction in the ſtate, and infidelity in the church; thoſe to whom the guardianſhip of our conſtitution has been committed, cannot better diſcharge their truſt, than by giving all poſſible encouragement to the building additional churches in all populous places, where thoſe already built prove too ſmall for the accommodation of the inhabitants.

Whereas, if to remedy this inconvenience, the preſent mode of erecting chapels at the charge of individuals, with an eye to private emolument, continue to be adopted, we are promoting the very object which Dr. PRIESTLEY has before him; for we are thereby ſeparating the great body of the people from the eſtabliſhed church; and in a manner

forcing them to become non-conformiſts, by rendering their communion with the church incompatible with their circumſtances. In which caſe, we muſt not be ſurpriſed, if the body of the people ſhould feel unintereſted for the preſervation of an eſtabliſhment, which ſeems to take ſo little concern about them.

The conſequences of ſuch a ruinous practice are incalculable; and never more to be dreaded than in theſe times, when the licentious doctrines of equality and conſequent inſubordination are induſtriouſly propagated; doctrines, which a plan of religious worſhip ſeparating the rich from the poor ſeems peculiarly calculated to promote.

There is indeed an *equality*, by which all Chriſtians ſtand connected with each other, as children of the ſame heavenly Father; which ought as much as poſſible to be kept alive among us in all religious aſſemblies. A church therefore never looks ſo much like what it ought to be, as when all ranks of people join together in theſe general acts of worſhip, which are expreſſive of their general dependence upon that "LORD over all, who, in one ſenſe or another, is rich unto all who call upon him." The GOD whom we worſhip is no reſpecter of perſons; the church, be conſiſtent with order and decency, to keep this in

view; that the rich, from this indiſtinctive plan of worſhip, may continually be taught to remember that the poor man is his brother; and that the poor man may be ſupported in the conſcientious diſcharge of his humble and laborious duties in life, by looking forward to the day, when all worldly diſtinctions will be ſwallowed up in that common relationſhip, which all true members of the church will then bear to CHRIST its head.

Sorry we are to think, that the doctrines which have long been induſtriouſly circulated, and which have produced too ſucceſsful an effect upon the minds of the people of this country, are inimical to government in any ſhape. The very name of an eſtabliſhment in theſe days, as it implies ſome reſtraint upon liberty, conveys to the ears of many an unwelcome ſound. Separated from the errors and freed from the chains of Popery, we ſeem, alas! (to make uſe of the words of a great writer) to be "breaking out into a ſtate of religious anarchy." An attention, therefore, to the ſubject before us becomes a matter of moſt important concern.

We do not profeſs ourſelves to be in the number of thoſe, if there be any ſuch, who think that there is nothing amiſs amongſt us; for this would be to lay

claim to that perfection which belongs not to man. At the ſame time, in reference to the preſent ſtate of things in the world, it may be proper to ſuggeſt to the reader, the great danger of his being too readily impreſſed with the idea of improvement, either in church or ſtate. There are no two words in the Engliſh language, the ſound of which, from the uſe that has been lately made of them, conveys ſo ſtrong a ſenſe of alarm to the thinking mind, as thoſe of liberty and reformation. Things moſt valuable in themſelves become moſt deſtructive in their abuſe. We have lived to ſee, what we ſhould not otherwiſe have believed, the giants of infidelity waging open war againſt heaven; falſe philoſophers, under the ſpecious pretence of diffuſing light and liberty through a benighted and enſlaved world, engaged in a more daring league of ſyſtematic oppoſition to the plans of Divine Providence for the benefit of mankind, than has been ever witneſſed. It is with a mixture of horror and indignation, that we look back to the ſcenes, which theſe miniſters of rebellious darkneſs have been permitted to bring forth; it is with awe and trembling, we look forward to what may, in the Divine Council, be the winding up of this eventful tragedy.

It is ſome conſolation, indeed, to thoſe who are humbly waiting for their LORD's coming, to think, that the gates of hell ſhall not finally prevail againſt his church. At the ſame time it ſhould ſeem, as if "woe had been pronounced againſt the inhabitants of the earth and of the ſea; and that the Devil was come down unto them, having great wrath, becauſe he knoweth that he hath but a ſhort time." Rev. xii. 12.

From the chapter which modern hiſtory preſents to our peruſal, we feel confident in the aſſertion, that even the moſt corrupt religion is to be preferred to no religion at all; and that where reformation is really wanted, it is not to be effected by means which tend to the diſſolution of conſtituted authority: Whilſt from the plan, which has been adopted for the purpoſe of enabling infidelity to triumph over the Chriſtian cauſe, we heſitate not to affirm, that the preſervation of our eſtabliſhment is *eſſential* to the continuance of the church in this country; it being the beſt ſecurity againſt that Babel of religious confuſion and conſequent infidelity, which would be the ultimate effect of its deſtruction. An eſtabliſhment is to be regarded as the out-work of religion. The enemy who pulls it down, does it but with a view to

the more complete deſtruction of the citadel which it was deſigned to ſecure.

Some well-meaning people, indeed, have found a way of ſatisfying themſelves upon this head, by making the church of CHRIST and church of England mean two different things: and thus, while they flatter themſelves that they are acting upon the beſt principle, they are putting themſelves into a ſtate of preparation to become inſtrumental in the deſtruction of that church of which they profeſs themſelves members. That ignorant people ſhould be carried away with ſo plauſible an idea, can be no matter of ſurpriſe; they have been, and always will be, impoſed upon by ſounds. But that men of reading and education ſhould adopt it, affords one proof among many, that experience does not always furniſh wiſdom.

It muſt be confeſſed, indeed, that the age in which we live, though a reading, is certainly not a learned, age. Light publications of the day, calculated for the purpoſe of preſent entertainment, and ſuperficial information, are preferred to the ſcientific pages of the learned, though leſs amuſing writer, which require abſtraction of thought and intenſeneſs of application to make them yield fruit to the reader. Advantage therefore, which we frequent, ought, as far as may

has been induſtriouſly taken of this general taſte for ſuperficial reading, to undermine thoſe fundamental principles of government, both in church and ſtate, which conſtituted in better times a ſtandard for judgment in theſe matters; by means of thoſe plauſible theories and ſpecious arguments, which, by unhinging and unſettling the human mind, are calculated to prepare it for every change.

Againſt ſuch men and their writings it was never perhaps more neceſſary to be on our guard than in theſe days; when the right of private judgment and the freedom of enquiry (principles in themſelves of unqueſtionable and excellent uſe, when properly employed) have been carried to ſuch an extent, as in a manner to ſet at nought all authority, under the plauſible pretence of delivering mankind from eſtabliſhed prejudices.

To form a judgment, indeed, from the ſyſtems of ſome modern ſpeculatiſts, which manifeſt a ſupercilious inattention to the ſober deductions of all who have gone before them, in the walks either of religious or political knowledge, we ſhould conclude, that we were newly dropt into a world of yeſterday, and had all our experience to learn; or that our forefathers had been ſleeping through a long dark night of ig-

norance and inſenſibility, or at beſt had been groping their way by a glimmering taper, which had afforded but light ſufficient to make their darkneſs viſible; and that we, their more favoured ſons, were juſt opening our eyes to that dawn of enlightened reaſon, which our Creator in his wiſdom had thought fit to reſerve for the more full illumination for the preſent day.

What people are taught to deſpiſe, they will not long be ſolicitous to preſerve. Upon this principle, it may be a ſubject worthy the conſideration of thoſe who really mean well to our eſtabliſhment, whether this imaginary diſtinction between the church of CHRIST and church of England now propagating among us be not deſigned, by the enemies of the latter, as an introductory ſtep to its wiſhed-for diſſolution.

Wiſe and good men, in diſcerning the ſigns of the times, will learn from them, we truſt, a ſeaſonable leſſon of prudence and caution.

Should it, however, be the will of that wiſe Being who directeth all things, (as from the complexion of the times we are occaſionally led to fear may be the caſe) that this nation ſhould learn a ſecond leſſon in that licentious ſchool, in which it might be thought that it had remained a length of time ſufficient to have received a finiſhed education; it may at leaſt be

hoped that the clergy will not be brought in as acceſſary to the judgment.

Be it remembered, that the moſt common way of wounding the church has been through the ſides of its clergy. This method was practiſed with ſucceſs, when the church of this country poſſeſſed a moſt pious and able miniſtry. We are not therefore to be ſurpriſed that it ſhould be attempted in the preſent day.

But although no argument drawn from the conduct of individuals ought in equity to bear againſt the body to which they belong; yet when a prejudice once takes poſſeſſion of the human mind, it is not always in the power of reaſon to confine it to the preciſe object that originally gave riſe to it. This conſideration ſhould make the clergy, of all men, moſt circumſpect in their conduct; becauſe, as the world will judge, it is in their power to do the greateſt injury to the cauſe, of which they ought to be the moſt effectual ſupporters.

We are told, that "the time is faſt approaching, when Chriſtianity will be almoſt as openly diſavowed in the language, as in fact it is already ſuppoſed to have diſappeared from the conduct, of men; when infidelity will be held to be the neceſſary appendage of a man of faſhion; and *to believe* will be

deemed the indication of a feeble mind, and a contracted underſtanding."* Should ſuch, alas! be the actual condition of this country, the hiſtory of the Chriſtian church will ſhew what its future condition muſt be. In ſuch caſe, with lamenting JEREMY we may weep over the fallen "city become as a widow; ſhe that was great among the nations, and princeſs among the provinces: among all her lovers ſhe hath none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherouſly with her. The ways of Zion do mourn, becauſe none come to the ſolemn feaſts: all her gates are deſolate: her prieſts ſigh, her virgins are afflicted, and ſhe is in bitterneſs. Her adverſaries are the chief; her enemies proſper; for the LORD hath afflicted her, for the multitude of her tranſgreſſions." Lamentations of JEREMIAH, i. That GOD, who ſpared not the countries where his church was originally planted, but in conſequence of their corruption ſuffered the light of his truth to depart from them, will moſt aſſuredly not ſpare this country under ſimilar circumſtances. When the purpoſe for which the church has been eſtabliſhed is not anſwered, it will not long be ſuffered to mock the deſign of its Divine Founder. In the prophetic language, when the vine;

* WILBERFORCE, p. 375.

yard which GOD has encloſed ſhall ceaſe to be duly cultivated; and the vine be ſuffered to take its wild and natural growth; the hedge by which it had been ſeparated from the waſte will be pulled down; and the boar out of the wood, and the wild beaſt of the field, be permitted to devour it. Some anti-chriſtian power, intent upon nothing but plunder and deſtruction, or a domeſtic enemy having the ſame object in view, will ſooner or later be let looſe upon a church when in this degenerate condition, and become the inſtrument of executing upon her the vengeance due to her crimes. May GOD give the people of this nation ſuch a ſight of their danger, as may tend effectually to guard them againſt it!

Indiſpoſed, as I think I am, to ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm, the preſent events of Europe are nevertheleſs of ſo awful and alarming a kind, as to affect me with the moſt ſerious and intereſting concern. Upon the authority of ſacred writ we are aſſured, that the time muſt come when "the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of GOD and of his CHRIST." That Being "who ſeeth the end from the beginning;" before whom all nations are as nothing, yea, leſs than nothing;" will make human policy ſubſervient to the accompliſhment of his wiſe

purpoſes. What important page in the great hiſtory of the world may now be turning over, it is not for us to determine. As Chriſtians, we look with reverence to the iſſue of the Divine councils, whatever it may be; knowing that all things will work together for good to thoſe who have the LORD for their GOD. At the ſame time we ſhould want the feelings of men, did we not tremble at the threatening aſpect of that black cloud, which has been long pouring forth ſweeping deſtruction upon the nations around us.

In ſuch a critical ſeaſon, the office of the prieſthood becomes more than ever an office of dignified importance. In the character of atoning AARON, with incenſe in his hand, the prieſt is called upon to ſtand as it were between the dead and the living; and, if it may be, to ſtay the plague, the worſt of plagues, that plague of religious and moral diſorder, which has long deformed the face of civilized Europe.

Should not the ſalt have quite loſt its ſavour, the land which we inhabit may yet be ſeaſoned and thereby preſerved. In ſuch caſe, the judgments of the LORD now in the earth, inſtead of bringing down and deſtroying, will be employed in mercy to purge and purify our church and nation.

To this end the prieſts and miniſters of the LORD muſt ſtand between the porch and the altar, and exert themſelves, "before their eyes begin to wax dim, that they may not ſee; and ere the lamp of GOD goeth out in the temple of the LORD." 1 SAM. iii. If, in conſequence of the unſettled notions which now prevail upon religious ſubjects, Chriſtians are continually dropping away from the church, let it be for any cauſe rather than on account of the irregularity, incapacity, or want of zeal, in its miniſters.

Ignorance, among the lower order of people at leaſt, is well known to be one general cauſe of ſeparation from the church. Let it be an object with the clergy, then, to remove that ignorance with reſpect to the church, by bringing their people ſo acquainted with its nature, and the deſign of its eſtabliſhment, that they may feel it their duty to continue members of it. Whilſt they are ſuffered to remain uninformed upon this ſubject, the preſervation of Chriſtian unity is not to be expected.

But above all, their object muſt be to take away all juſt reaſon for the deſertion of their miniſtry, by giving full proof of their evangelical commiſſion. With the Apoſtle they muſt be able to ſay to their hearers, "We take you to record this day, that we

are pure from the blood of all men; for we have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of GOD." The plea generally advanced by modern ſeparatiſts, that *ſound doctrine* is not preached in our church, upon how partial ground ſoever it may really ſtand, muſt at all events be effectually removed. For the people muſt not only be taught, that it is their duty to live in communion with the church; they muſt moreover be ſatisfied, that they ſhall be profited by that communion. In a matter of this importance, men will take the liberty to judge for themſelves: and if they have reaſon to think that they are not fed with the true bread of life within the walls of the church, they will unqueſtionably ſeek it, where they fancy it may be found, either in fields or in conventicles.

And if to the preaching ſound doctrine the clergy would add an occaſional explanation of the meaning of our church offices, that their congregations may become active and ſpiritual performers in them; the people would ſoon be convinced that thoſe Chriſtians, who would offer up to GOD the moſt reaſonable ſervice, muſt come to the church of England to do it.

This is the only way, that I know, to preſerve the unity of the church; and to revive, through Divine grace, the ſpirit of Chriſtianity; by informing men

in the firſt place, that there is ſuch a thing as an eſtabliſhed conſtitution of the church of CHRIST, and that Chriſtians are to conſider themſelves members of it, as a fold of ſheep gathered under its ſhepherd, and not as ſtraggling individuals: and in the ſecond place, by convincing them, that the church is beſt calculated to carry all thoſe purpoſes into effect, for which it has been eſtabliſhed by its Divine Founder.

It were devoutly to be wiſhed, and I truſt there is but one opinion among my brethren upon this head, that every miniſter of the church might ſo diſcharge his duty in theſe reſpects, as to be qualified, in the language of Archbiſhop SHARP, thus to addreſs himſelf to his people: "This I am ſure of, ſo long as you continue in our communion, you are in the communion of the true church of CHRIST. I dare anſwer for the ſalvation of all thoſe who, continuing in our church, live up to the principles of it. But I dare anſwer nothing for them, who, being brought up in this church, and having ſo great opportunities given them of knowing the truth, do yet depart from it. I pray GOD, they may be able to anſwer for themſelves.

I conclude this diſcourſe with what my brethren, the clergy, may probably thank me for redeeming

from oblivion; I mean that prayer from the elegant pen of ERASMUS, which was heretofore ſet forth as a part or appendix to a Primer or Liturgy, which HENRY the Eighth cauſed to be publiſhed by the ſupreme authority of the Church of England, and which appears ſtrictly adapted to the circumſtances of the preſent times.

" DOMINE JESU CHRISTE, qui omnipotentiâ tuâ feciſti omnes creaturas, viſibiles, inviſibiles, et Divinâ ſapientiâ tuâ gubernaſti diſpoſuiſtique omnia ordinatè; qui ineffabili bonitate tuâ cuſtodis, defendis, promovesque omnia; qui profundâ miſericordiâ tuâ reficis ruinoſa, renovas collapſa, vivificas mortuos; digneris (precamur) ad extremum, in dilectam ſponſam tuam eccleſiam, dulcem illum et miſericordem vultum tuum, quo cæleſtia omnia terreſtriaque, et quæ ſupra cœlum infráque terram ſunt pacificas, conjicere: digneris teneros miſericordesque oculos in nos convertere, quibus PETRUM ſemel, magnum eccleſiæ tuæ paſtorem aſpexiſti, et continuò rediit ſecum in memoriam, et in pœnitentiam ductus eſt; quibus diſperſam ſemel multitudinem perluſtraſti, et miſericordiâ commovebaris, quod boni paſtoris defectu errabant quaſi oves ſparſæ palentesque. Tu ſatis vides, bone Paſtor, quot varia luporum genera in ovilia tua irruperunt, é quibus

unuſquiſque clamat, Hìc CHRISTUS eſt, Hìc CHRISTUS eſt: ita ut, ſi fieri poſſet, in errores deducerentur electi. Tu vides, quibus flatibus, quibus fluctibus, quibus tempeſtatibus, miſera navis jactatur; in quâ puſillus grex tuus de ſubmerſione periclitatur. Quid autem nunc reſtat, niſi ut prorſum ſubmergatur, omnesque nos pereamus? Hujus tempeſtatis cauſa eſt noſtra iniquitas et depravata vita; hoc nos videmus et confitemur, juſtitiam tuam cernimus, et injuſtitiam noſtram lamentamur: ſed ad miſericordiam tuam provocamus quæ (ſecundum pſalmum prophetæ tui) exuperat omnia opera; multa ſupplicia ſuſtinuimus, multis bellis fracti, multis jacturis bonorum conſumpti, tot morborum peſtiumque generibus flagellati, tot fluctibus quaſsati, tot perterrefacti; et nullus tamen nobis ità fatigatis, et inuſitatâ malorum vi debilitatis, portus perfugiumque apparet, ſed quotidie magis magisque graves pluresque pœnæ imminere cervicibus noſtris videntur. Non hìc de tuâ aſperitate conquerimur, miſericordiſſime DOMINE, ſed tuam potius miſericordiam intuemur, quòd longè graviores plagas commeriti ſumus. Nos verò abs te, miſericordiſſime DOMINE, precamur, non quid meritis noſtris dignum ſit conſideres aut perpendas; ſed potius quid deceat miſericordiam tuam, ſine quâ ne angeli quidem in cœlo

consistere possunt, nedum nos vasa luti infirma. Miserere nostri, REDEMPTOR noster, qui facillimè exoraris, non quod nos misericordiâ tuâ digni sumus; sed hanc gloriam nomini tuo dato. Ne patiaris Judæos, Turcas, reliquosque qui vel non noverunt Te, vel gloriæ tuæ invident, perpetuò de nobis triumphare et dicere; ubi DEUS, ubi REDEMPTOR, ubi SERVATOR, ubi Sponsus illorum est? Hæc contumeliosa verba et convitia in te, DOMINE, redundant; dum ex malis nostris bonitatem tuam existimant, nos derelinqui putant, quos emendari non cernunt. Cum semel in navigio dormires, et tempestas subitò exorta minaretur mortem omnibus qui in navi erant, ad clamorem paucorum discipulorum excitabaris; et continuò fluctus quieverunt, ventus cessavit, tempestas in magnam tranquilitatem conversa est; aquæ mutæ Creatoris vocem agnoverunt. In hâc autem longè graviore tempestate, in quâ non paucorum hominum corpora in discrimen veniunt, sed innumerabiles animæ periclitant; ad vocem universæ ecclesiæ tuæ, DOMINE, precamur, ut vigiles, quæ nunc in periculo submersionis est. Tot jam millia hominum clamitant, DOMINE, serva nos, perimus; tempestas hæc humanam potentiam superat, immo verò conatus eorum qui illi præsidium ferrent, in contrarium avertuntur.

Quod hæc præſtabit, ſolum verbum tuum eſt: verbum ſolum oris tui dicito, tempeſtas ceſſa, et confeſtim tranquillitas expetita apparebit. Quot millibus impiorum pepercisſes, ſi in civitate Sodomæ vel decem inventi fuiſſent: nunc vero tot millibus hominum gloriam nominis tui amantium, et propter decorem domûs tuæ gementem, non horum precibus adductus iram remittes, et conſuetarum antiquarumque miſericordiarum tuarum recordaberis? An non Divinâ ſapientiâ tuâ noſtram ſtultitiam in gloriam tuam convertes? An non malorum improbitatem in eccleſiæ tuæ bonum commutabis? Cum enim miſericordia tua ſolet omnia ſublevare, cum res nobis immedicabilis eſſe videtur; nec potentiâ aut ſapientiâ humanâ corrigi poteſt. Tu ſolus res etiam inordinatiſſimas in ordinem adducis, qui ſolus author conſervatorque pacis es. Tu antiquam confuſionem quam Chaos appellamus formaviſti, in quâ ſine ordine, ſine modo, perturbatè diſcordia ſemina rerum jacebant, et admirabili ſerie res naturâ ſuâ pugnantes, vinculo perpetuo copulaviſti et colligaviſti. Quanto, quæſo, major confuſio eſt hæc; ubi nulla charitas, nulla fides, nulla copulatio amoris, nulla legum, nulla magiſtratuum reverentia, nulla opinionum conſenſio; ſed quaſi in perturbatiſſimo choro unuſquiſque diverſum canit?

In cœleſtibus planetis nulla eſt diſſenſio; elementa ſuas ſedes tenent, unumquodque conſtitutum ſibi officium facit: et ſponſam ſuam cujus causâ omnia facta ſunt, continuâ ſic diſſenſione perire et labefactari permittis? Malosne ſpiritus ſeditionis authores atque adminiſtros, in ditione tuâ ſine ullâ reprehenſione ita regnare permittes? potentemque illum iniquitatis ducem, quem ſemel dejeceras, caſtra invadere et milites tuos, ſpoliare fines? Cum hìc in hominibus verſabaris, vocem tuam fugiebant dæmones. Emitte, quæſumus, DOMINE, ſpiritum tuum, qui e pectoribus omnium nomen tuum profitentium malos ſpiritus magiſtros intemperantiæ, avaritiæ, vanæ gloriæ, libidinum, ſcelerum, diſcordiæ, abigat. Crea in nobis, Rex et DEUS noſter, cor mundum, et ſpiritum ſanctum in pectoribus noſtris renova, nec ſpiritum ſanctum tuum auferas a nobis. Reſtitue nobis fructum ſalutaris ſanitatis tuæ, et ſpiritu principali corrobora ſponſam paſtoreſque ejus. Hoc ſpiritu reconciliaſti cœleſtia terreſtribus, hoc formaſti ac reduxiſti tot linguas, tot nationes, tam diverſa hominum genera in unum corpus eccleſiæ, quod corpus eodem ſpiritu copulatur capiti. Hunc ſpiritum ſi in omnium hominum cordibus renovare digneris, tum externæ hæ quoque miſeriæ ceſſabunt: aut ſi non ceſſaverint, ad

fructum saltem, utilitatemque diligentium te traducentur. Siste hanc, DOMINE JESU, confusionem; hoc horribile Chaos in ordinem reducito: expande spiritum tuum super aquas malè fluctuantium opinionum. Et quia spiritus tuus, qui juxta prophetæ sententiam continet omnia, scientiam etiam habet vocis; effice, ut quemadmodum omnibus qui in domo tuâ sunt, unum lumen, unus DEUS, una spes, unus spiritus; sic unam quoque habeant vocem, unam cantilenam, unum sonum, unam Catholicam veritatem profitentes. Cum in cœlum gloriosè ascendisti, demisisti de cœlo res pretiosissimas; dedisti dona hominibus, varia munera spiritûs divisisti: renova, DOMINE, de cœlo veterem bonitatem; da nunc ecclesiæ labefactæ et inclinatæ, quod illi emergenti et exorienti initia dederas. Da principibus magistratibusque gratiam timoris tui; ut ita rempublicam suam gubernent, quasi statim tibi, REGI Regum, rationem reddituri. Da sapientiam semper assistricem illis, ut quodcunque optimum factu fuerit, et animo provideant, et factis persequantur. Da episcopis tuis donum prophetiæ, ut sanctas scripturas non ex suis ingeniis, sed tuâin spiratione declarent et interpretentur. Da triplicem illis charitatem, quam a PETRO requirebas, quando illius curæ oves tuas commisisti,

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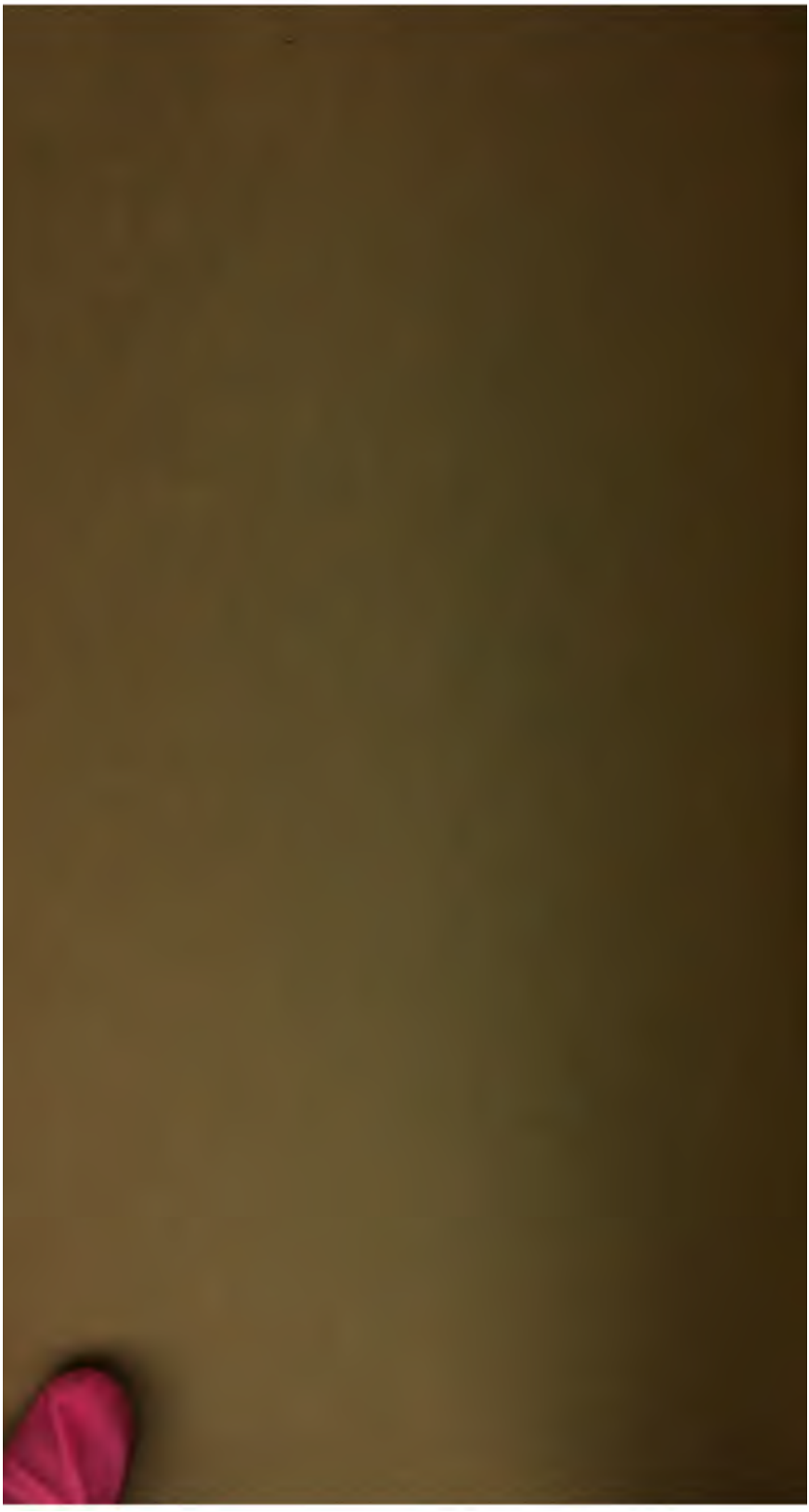
FINIS.

Cruttwell, Printer, St. James's-Street, Bath.



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